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NATHAN THE WISE.

LESSING.

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NATHAN THE WISE.

A Dramatic Poem,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING.

Translated from the German,

WITH

A BIOGRAPHY OF LESSING, AND A CRITICAL SURVEY OF HIS POSITION, WRITINGS, ETC.,

BY

Dr. Adolphus Reich.

LONDON:
A. W. BENNETT, 5, BISHOPSGATE WITHOUT.

1860.

Introite, nam et hic Dii sunt !

APUD GELLIUM.

LONDON : PRINTED FOR A. W. BENNETT, BISHOPSGATE WITHOUT.

Introduction, Biography of Lessing,

AND

Critical Survey of his Position, Writings, &c.

HUMAN history is a chain, the links of which are human generations, and sometimes—individuals.

It is not the part of mankind to shoot the arrows of inquiry beyond the limits of supposition and conclusion, to re-trace this chain further back than to the borders of nebulous Mythology, nor to anticipate its further extent or final issue,—for its beginning is Eternity, and its end is Infiniteness, and both ends meet in what we believe but cannot fathom.

But it is certainly the duty of mankind to learn to know the History of the Race, as far as resources and expedients render it feasible; to ascertain *whereto* that chain of human existences is extending and pointing,—to certify of what ore it is forged,—to affirm the construction and connexion of its links. For the nature of things is indicative of their purpose, and "Purpose" is the great aim of all our studies and exertions.

"The history of the world is the doom of the world," says Schiller. To learn to know the dooms of men and nations, we must learn their History. To understand their History, we must understand their own selves. But how is that to be accomplished?

There is a motto in the shape of a Gallic adage:

"*Le style c'est l'homme.*" Now the style of a man is his mode of expressing his thoughts—but *the Style of Nations is their Literature.* Therefore a man of thought will always consider it imperative to make knowledge of Literatures the basis of his study of Universal History. This principle being a most sound and practical one, it has naturally been resorted to by England especially.

It has always been and is England's glory, to appreciate and adopt the valuable and eminent productions of human Intellect and Genius, from whatever quarter of the Globe they may proceed, by whatever nation offered, and in whatever form presented. This principle has at all times been employed with particular predilection and eagerness with regard to Foreign Literatures; and the British People, not too proud to learn, but only too proud to learn, have added the literary treasures of all nations to their own store, and thus not only enhanced their intelligence and exalted their views of the world, but also most brilliantly manifested and propagated the principal symptom and privilege of Freedom, namely Universal Spiritual Unity.

Of all Foreign Literatures, the German Literature in particular could not fail constantly to attract the attention, and strongly to excite the intellectual activity, of educated Englishmen. And with good reason. For,—even setting aside the above-mentioned great general motives of study,—to devote an assiduous and earnest study to a tongue which is the mother of their mother-tongue, and to a Literature the excellency and profoundness of which is indisputable, is only to do justice to the German Language and Literature, and at the same time to meet a great want of Spiritual England.

Still these exertions have not been altogether persevering, eager, and systematic enough—at least as far as lasting transplantation by way of Translation into English is concerned—to satisfy the general desire of the intelligent

English circles, and to render German Literature intelligible and accessible to those who are not German Scholars; and while all British Standard Authors, and even the inferior ones, are common property with the German Nation, we are ashamed to confess that the excellent German Literature has remained a monopoly of that comparatively small number of Englishmen who are able to read the originals; the rest is confined to scarce, and in most cases, defective translations.

So much more we rejoice and hail the palpable desire now breaking forth, and the obvious earnest efforts lately made from many sides, to have German Literature at last introduced into English life *in optimâ formâ;* and in procuring for the English public a correct and faithful Translation of one of the most eminent master-pieces of German Literature, we trust we offer to the English reader a boon, most instructive and interesting, and we hope, most welcome.

"Nathan the Wise" is a work which, ever since it was first published, has maintained its place on the summit of the German Parnassus and of Universal Fame, which it well deserves, through its being the most elaborate, elegant, refined, and accomplished, as to the form, and the most learned, ingenious, instructive and edifying, as to the object and its treatment, which ever came from a German pen.

The mere name of its Author, indeed, would suffice to recommend it, for who has not heard or read some subtle, striking, philosophical thought, some acute logical argument, some learned theological essay, some sagacious critical animadversion on various branches of science and art, some philological research, or some poetical production, of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing? Who has not heard of the man, of whom Moses Mendelssohn said: "*He anticipated his Century by more than a Generation,*" and of

whom Madame de Staël wrote: "*Sa critique est un traité sur le cœur humain, autant qu'une poétique littéraire*"? Who has not heard of him, who on the field of German Literature commenced and completed a revolution, and through it paved the road on which the Spirit of future ages advances? Of the man to whom History has attributed the epithet of "the Luther of German National Literature"?

But we anticipate.

Still it devolves upon us as a highly important duty, to offer beforehand one remark, which, though evoked only by a single expression of apprehension, nevertheless has become necessary for the purpose of meeting that apprehension, and in it, similar imputations, which might possibly be brought to bear upon this Translation. We mean the opinions, doubts, and apprehensions, which may be entertained by some readers regarding the Religious views and tendencies of Lessing, and more particularly the way in which he has manifested them in his writings.

It will suffice if we say, that this point is by no means the only or the paramount scope of this publication; that in presenting Lessing to the English Public, we present Lessing the great German Literatus and Literary Reformer, who, being a genius and a man of most refined sentiments, necessarily grappled with many and manifold questions bearing upon the development and refinement of the human mind. Lessing was not a fanatical Iconoclast; there is no theological hair-splitting in his writings, though an abundance of religious ideas and philanthropic sentiments. The present book, avowedly containing the essence of Lessing's religious views and human feelings, teaches Truth, — that is, devotedness to God, and love and tolerance for his fellow-men. We introduce it to the English reader as a most eminent specimen of German Literature, as a most distinguished production of human

Genius, and as a work with a moral tendency. It is neither intended for the propagation of certain religious views, nor for the refutation of others.

Reverting to our topic, which in the first place ought to be a Biography, or at least a biographical sketch, of Lessing, we cannot help observing, that a brief review of the state of German Literature during the period prior to Lessing's appearance on the literary field, would prove a most useful assistance to the reader's better understanding of Lessing's activity and position.

Taking a general retrospect, our attention is necessarily fixed on the prominent figure of Martin Luther, and the fact presses itself upon our notice, that, rigorously considered, that great Religious Reformer was at the same time also the man from whom the first impulses, as well as the first actions, towards a Literary Reformation originated. To quote the words of an English author: Luther translated the entire Bible into vulgar German, and thus submitted the criterion of Faith to the verdict of universal suffrage. Luther's translation of the Bible is a truly revolutionary epoch in the history of German Literature and Poetry. It introduced a new dialect, that of Saxony, to national preference. All the Protestants adopted this Bible, and their itinerant preachers and proselytizers commented on it in the language in which it was composed; indeed they were chiefly Wittenberg Students, educated under Luther. Thus the provincialism of Saxony became prevalent in all the Protestant circles. The Catholic Theologians again were almost obliged to reply to controversial writings in the same speech in which they were written, else the impression could not be efficaciously counteracted; and by degrees, the books which had a preference of circulation and attention were mostly drawn up in Saxon. Into Saxon also Luther made his rhymed version of the Psalms, and every village schoolboy among

the Protestants was presently employed, in getting them by heart, and helping to sing them on a Sunday. From that time to the present, the German of Saxony has been considered as the standard of National Language.

So, indeed, the foundation-stone of a National Literature was laid, but as is the case with many other foundation-stones, it remained for a long time without any superstructure. For the powerful creative stimulus Luther gave to vernacular idiom and poetry, soon relaxed under the derogatory influence of theological controversies, and language and the art of composition at last receded towards their previous rudeness. The zealous protests of an Opitz, Schlottel, Leibnitz, &c., died away amidst the uproars caused by that ill-famed "*Rabies Theologorum.*"

Thus it happened, that while at the beginning of the 17th century all other civilized nations were on the ascent to literary maturity, or already in the very zenith of it, or even past their literary triumphs, — Germany had still to strive against hereditary gloom and mysticism, and to abolish the idolatry of foreign idioms; in a word, to do the whole of her literary emancipation. But during the whole of the first half of the 18th century, no essential results whatever proceeded from the few and comparatively feeble exertions made towards this end; for there were obstacles to overcome, many of them stupendous enough to baffle the new-born enthusiasm of men like Thomasius, Francke, &c. The Universities, originally intended for arenas for free inquiry and development of the National Spirit, had sunk down to laboratories of professional learning.

The Latin language rested on the native tongue with the tormenting and choking pressure of a nightmare. Neither an oration nor a book was noticed, or pronounced perfect, unless delivered or written in the language of Cicero. "Latin" and "learned" were identical. This

Latin tyrant had an appropriate adjunct in her Gallic daughter, the French language; the latter treating the native idiom of Germany much in the style a haughty dandy treats a rude ill-bred person in a company.

But by far the greatest of all those evils, and which at the same time were the stumbling-blocks to nearly all the patriotic champions, were, in the first place—the scholastic barbarism of religious dogmatism; and secondly—the despotic policy of German Princes. These twofold fetters were to be shaken off, or at least shaken, ere the evil traditions and obnoxious usages in vernacular Literature could be repressed and ultimately suppressed.

As to the liberation of Literature from narrow-minded despotism, it was not before Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, had laid down his maxim, "*In my Dominions everybody is at liberty to save his Soul, according to his own notions,*" that German men of genius, and the apostles of German Literature, found not only an asylum, but also a stronghold, where, under the powerful protection of the wings of the Prussian Eagle, they could venture to think, to speak, and to write.

Speaking of the purification and development of German Language and Literature, we must not omit to record the name of the excellent Thomasius, to whom the first effective efforts to introduce the German Language into German Life and German Schools are attributable. With the year 1688, when first at the Leipzig University he announced and delivered *Lectures in the German Language*, there begins a new era in our Literature and National Science. It was also he who called into existence the first German Literary Journal, which continued to be the only publication of this kind until Lessing's "Literatur Briefe" (Letters on Literature) appeared, which of course imbued the former with new life and new tendencies.

At last Gottsched published a German Grammar; others

followed, and German Grammar and German Composition suddenly became such a favorite task with our Scholars, young and old, as bears sufficient testimony, that the oppressed National Spirit only wanted a hint, a direction, to break forth powerfully and with increasing splendour.

But very soon a literary schism divided the Teutones into two hostile encampments, the head-quarters of which were Zurich and Leipzig. At the latter place Gottsched and his partizans held up the standard of *French* Literature as their Model and Palladium, whereas in the Swiss city Bodmer and his disciples paid homage to the genius of *English* authors. These two antagonistic Schools, though most pertinaciously struggling for the palm of popularity, and being by no means promoters of the Spiritual Unity of their country at large, still proved most serviceable to the great cause of enlightenment, in so far as their very disputes and controversies attracted general attention, and incited general interest; they made Science and Education affairs of the nation. Besides, they were productive of many notable men, who, however differing in principles, still united in the purpose.

But it is beyond the aim of these pages to dwell in detail on all the remarkable literary men in the epoch now ensuing. Still we must not omit to mention Klopstock and Wieland, those Dioscuri, who were the harbingers of an approaching legion of bright literary stars, which, through Lessing's reformatory attainments, afterwards accumulated and appeared as a radiant galaxy on the horizon of Classical German Literature. Klopstock's *Messiah* and Wieland's *Agathon* and *Oberon* preceded, as a glorious dawn, the day of victory which German Idiom and German Intellect were to gain over the Latin and French tyranny.

As to Philosophy, the enlightenment of the century had begun with Psychological Empiricism, as John

Locke developed it in England. This doctrine found its way into Germany, but not before the middle of the century. The Speculative Theory of Leibnitz was transformed into a popular Philosophy by Christian Wolf. The two Baumgartens, Davies, Feder, &c., were most active and successful propagators of this Philosophy, which, through its being based on Locke's "common sense," could not fail to gain popularity. Its influence soon became palpable in the productions of Literature, and was not only the indication, but also the cause, of the ensuing literary revolution. The combination of these doctrines with a young, free, and aspiring Literature, was productive of the so-called School of Rationalists, whose principal representatives were Nicolay, Abbt, Mendelssohn, and Lessing.

Berlin was the focus where these mighty intellectual rays combined and amalgamated. It was also at Berlin that Voltaire abolished the awe with which even learned priests were accustomed to approach the sacred books, and who thus became the founder of another Rational School of Scripture-Criticism, through which—whatever his own religious demerits—he paved the road for a Semler, Michaelis, Eichhorn, and Herder, and pointed out many theological weeds for the scythe of Lessing. In the region of Art, Winckelmann, the enthusiastic transplanter of classical taste into the semi-barbarian style of his country, began systematically to collect and record the laws of Art and Beauty in Sculpture and Architecture. He wrote a History of Art, and was indeed Lessing's worthy precursor in Criticism and the Literature of Art.

Such was the condition of Language and Intelligence, of Religion and Philosophy, of Literature and Criticism, in the period immediately preceding the appearance of Lessing.

In all branches of Science, and still more in Litera-

ture, which is its illustration, record, and instrument, there was an evident desire and eager endeavouring for development and amelioration; in a word, the manifested necessity of Reform. Things, though ripening towards the better, were still rather in a state of stagnation, and awaited the hand of a remoulding and reviving Reformer.

As such a Reformer appeared Lessing.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was born on the 22nd of January, 1729, in Kamenz, in the Prussian Province of Pomerania. His two immediate progenitors were scientific men; for the grandfather, Theophilus Lessing, distinguished himself at Leipzig, in 1670, through a Disputation "*De Religionum Tolerantiâ*," which Thesis, it appears, became an heirloom in the family, and apparently influenced the mind and writings of his celebrated grandson. The father, Johann Gottfried Lessing, was also a very voluminous author, and published a large number of Theological works in Latin.

The education which Gotthold Ephraim received was a strictly religious one. When scarcely five years of age, he was remarkable for his knowledge of the Bible and the Catechism, and his correct repetition of many of Luther's hymns. At this tender age Lessing also received his first Latin instruction, and astounded his delighted father with the progress he made.

When nine years old, he was sent to a boarding-school at Königsbruck, where the progress he made was so rapid, that though only twelve years of age, he was passed off for thirteen, this being the age legally required at the free-school in Meissen, to which, after a severe examination, he was transferred. In Meissen he devoted himself to the study of Greek and Latin with such assiduity, as soon elevated him to precocious scholarship. Not confining himself to the routine of the public lessons, he construed Theophrastus by himself, and translated a number of

Anacreon's Odes. He displayed a particular fondness for Terence, thus already manifesting his future taste in dramatic compositions. In Mathematics he likewise distinguished himself. He translated a portion of Euclid's Elements, and his last prize-composition at school was a Latin treatise: "*De Mathematicâ Barbarorum.*"

His first German poem was composed in 1746; it celebrates the battle of Kesselsdorf, fought in the Seven Years' War.

In 1746 too he quitted school, and was transferred to the University of Leipzig, for the purpose of studying Theology.

Here a new era of Lessing's life begins. Emancipated from the oppressive constraints of school-discipline, and surrounded by new and free companions, he plunged with delight into the free, gay, and animated torrents of German university-life. Here, not only the gates of the temple of knowledge, but also the circles of refined and fashionable life, were thrown open to him, and he entered them with all the delight of a young, enthusiastic, and striving mind. He soon made up for some intellectual deficiencies, and freed himself from certain innate rusticities. He continued French, and undertook English and Italian; he attended a riding, a dancing, and a fencing master, and soon adapted himself to the forms and manners of the fashionable world.

It hence appears clearly enough, that Lessing had neither a will nor an inclination for the study for which he was destined. He, like many of his fellow-students, disdained the lectures of the Professors, which they considered all but uninstructive. The mathematical lectures of Ernesti and Kaestner attracted him for a time, but he soon became wearied with them. He then took a fancy to Medicine, applied to his father for permission to become a physician,

and in the meantime entered the Faculty as a pupil. But of this study also he soon grew tired. His sanguine temper and restless spirit required a sphere and an object, calculated to incite and to employ his enormous intellectual powers. The debating society, instituted by Professor Kaestner for the discussion of topics of speculative philosophy, afforded him a most welcome arena for displaying his erudition and powers of argument. He joined the club, and during two years he was its Cynosure and pride. It was there that he became acquainted with Zachariæ, the elegiac poet, with the two Schlegels, and with Christoph Mylius. His intercourse with the latter, who conducted himself as a kind of "Diogenes" in Leipzig, and who with powerful eloquence espoused the doctrines of the Freethinkers, was the object of severe expostulations between Lessing and his father, although Lessing esteemed Mylius rather as a welcome colleague in the debating society, than as a congenial in mind and principles.

Lessing's predilection for dramatic compositions could not fail to render the Theatre highly attractive to him. From a passionate play-goer he became a frequenter of the green-room, and through his lively interest and judicious and instructive animadversions, he became a most welcome guest and a favourite with the actors and the manager. Weisse, the dramatist, then a student in Leipzig, and a habitual companion of Lessing, shared his passion for the Drama and the Theatre, and they in concert translated into German Alexandrines the "Hannibal" of Marivaux. Lessing's principal theatrical acquaintance was the renowned Madame Neuberin, a most accomplished performer and a handsome woman, and then directress of the Theatre of Leipzig. She, who lighted the celebrated *Auto da fé* for the Clown on the German stage, made Lessing—not her lover—but her protégé; and it was she

and her company who afterwards in Hamburg performed Lessing's first original play, "The Young Poet," and crowned him with his first dramatic laurels.

In 1749 the three sessions had elapsed, and Lessing's father, vainly expecting his son to take holy orders, or at least a medical degree, and finding himself unable to support his son any longer, indignantly left him to provide for himself. Lessing undertook the task, and now we find him for a time in hard struggle against the exigencies and vicissitudes of life. His success in Hamburg was but a temporary one, and his Patroness, Madame Neuberin, with a laudable regard to the wishes of Lessing's father, and with a view to coerce Lessing to turn to any branch of practical life, became inaccessible to her former protégé. After an excursion to Vienna and several other trips, which proved vain attempts to improve his condition, he in 1750 went to Berlin, where, together with Mylius, he undertook the publication of a quarterly journal: "Contributions to the History and Improvement of the Theatre," which were intended for a review of the Dramatic Literatures of all Nations; but this enterprize also proved a failure.

In Berlin M. Richier of Louvain introduced Lessing to Voltaire, at this author's special desire. Voltaire, most favourably impressed by Lessing's profound learning and brilliant accomplishments, desired him to translate for him a certain Memoir concerning his lawsuit with the Jew Hirsch. Lessing, disgusted with the object, declined the work and stigmatized it by an epigram; so his connection with the French Atheist came to an early termination. Lessing, according to his own observation, could never befriend himself to a man who considered Authors as his inferiors, and the Great as his peers. When on a subsequent occasion Nicolay observed, in Lessing's presence, "Voltaire had written much that was good and new;"

Lessing replied, " His good is not new, and his new is not good." It was also owing to Voltaire's narrow-minded vanity and jealous apprehensions, that Lessing's name became odious with the King of Prussia, and that his hopes of obtaining a place as Librarian, or a Professorship, were blighted. So Lessing resorted to Wittenberg, and there took a Master of Arts degree, in order to qualify himself for the situation in the Philological Seminary of Goettingen which his father was soliciting for him. At Wittenberg he translated from the Spanish—the study of which language he had begun together and in emulation with Mylius—a work on Craniology. He also began a Latin version of Klopstock's "Messiah," and wrote corrections and additions to Joecher's " Dictionary of Learned Men."

In 1753 Lessing returned to Berlin, where he became the successor of Mylius as regular contributor to a political and literary journal, printed for Voss, which journal (" Vossische Zeitung") exists up to the present time, and is the most widely circulated paper in Prussia. At that time Lessing published a third and fourth part of his lesser writings; comprising poems, letters of literary criticism, apologies, &c. Several of his comedies, which were published in fancy editions and gained the applause of the public, contributed not a little to reconcile Lessing's father to his son's devotedness to the dramatic art. Lessing also published translations of Marigny's " History of the Arabs," and of three letters of the King of Prussia. He also edited a number of the works of his friend Mylius, who had died in London on his way to America, whither Haller the poet and physician, and his friends, had subscribed to send him, on purpose to obtain information on certain objects of natural history, but, as Lessing thought, to deprive infidelity of a zealous apostle. In 1754 Lessing published the first two parts of his " Theatrical Library."

It was at this period that he meditated numberless literary projects, but his unsettled mind never allowed him to fix his attention on any particular task, and most of these projects were abandoned as quickly as they were conceived. Still these exertions effected a considerable amelioration in his pecuniary circumstances, and enabled him to invite his brother as his guest to Berlin.

Through his masterly skill at chess he became acquainted with Moses Mendelssohn, and again by Mendelssohn he was introduced to Nicolay, a printer and bookseller of literary ambition, and the author of valuable philosophical works. The acquaintance of these three men soon ripened to a most intimate friendship, particularly between Lessing and Mendelssohn, and through their discourses, disputations, and correspondence, they sensibly influenced each other's opinions and taste. The house of Nicolay being the rendezvous of men of letters, Lessing became also acquainted with Ramler, the lyric poet, whose taste and dexterity in poetical composition Lessing admired to such a degree, as to solicit his advice and to adopt his minute corrections in numberless cases. Also Sulzer, an eminent critic, and Suessmilch, a statist of distinction, belonged to the circle, and became cordial friends of Lessing.

Thus surrounded by men of talent and genius, and constantly influenced by them, Lessing began to acquire that knowledge of himself, which, while enabling him to appreciate his enormous mental resources, at the same time brought him to a sense of what he owed to himself, and of what the world had a right to expect from him. He now perceived that heretofore he had been neither systematic nor practical enough for any literary pursuit on a grand scale, and he acted accordingly. The first fruit accruing from this his reformed industry was the tragedy "Miss Sarah Sampson," a fine work, which was received with

universal applause, and translated into Italian, Danish and French.

His love of new scenery and new employment again drove him from Berlin, and he went to Leipzig, where he began to re-fashion Goldoni's "Erede Fortunata." There his friend Weisse introduced him to a Mr. Winckler, a wealthy man, who engaged Lessing as companion for a tour of four years through Europe. But they only travelled together as far as Amsterdam, where, on the point of embarking for England, Winckler received the news of the occupation of Leipzig by Prussian troops, and suddenly returned to look after his property. Lessing being dismissed abruptly and without indemnity, took his redress at law, and received the 800 dollars which, according to contract, were his four years' salary.

In 1754 he, at Mendelssohn's instigation, translated Hutcheson's "Moral Philosophy," and also Richardson's Selections from "Æsop's Fables." He also began a translation of Law's "Exhortations."

In 1757 Lessing, in concert with Nicolay and Mendelssohn, undertook the edition of a critical review, called the "Library of Fine Arts," out of the profits of which an annual prize was to be given to the best play offered for competition. This excellent review gained a brilliant success, and was afterwards continued by another generation of authors. Lessing himself offered a tragedy, in prose, in three acts, called "Virginia," for competition, but gained no prize. Portions of this composition he afterwards made use of in his tragedy "Emilia Galotti."

We are now to turn over a new page in Lessing's life. He enters a region of society apparently incongruous with his own position in life, and associates with persons whose characters, manners, &c. are apparently heterogeneous, compared to his own; he became connected with military men.

It has been said by some observer, with regard to officers of armies, that the French officer is all Soldier, and that the English officer is all Gentleman, but that the Prussian is both Soldier and Gentleman. We do not endorse this maxim implicitly; but Frederick the Great, Kleist, Koerner, and numberless other great Prussian writers, who wielded pen and sword with equal dexterity, are a sufficient proof that Lessing's intercourse with Prussian officers must be considered as a proper and becoming connexion between a man of letters and a *corps* whose renown as a highly intelligent and educated body is indisputable.

It was Kleist, the famous author of the "Spring," who, being ordered to join the army of Prince Henry in Berlin, induced Lessing to return thither. Lessing found the circle of his old friends increased by Voss, the bucolic poet.

In Leipzig in 1759 Lessing finished his heroic tragedy "Philotas," which was performed by Prussian officers as a refreshing interruption to the monotony of garrison-life. For the same purpose he composed the tragedy "The Jews;" both plays without any female character. After having assisted Ramler in editing Logan, an epigrammatic poet, Lessing in 1760 drew up the life of Sophocles, for which the honour of Membership of the Academy of Berlin was conferred on him. Shortly afterwards he became secretary to General Tauenzien, whom he followed to Breslau. Here, as a constant companion of military gentlemen, and while sharing their pleasures in a somewhat reckless way, he by no means dropped his literary pursuits. He read Spinoza, wrote several Antiquarian Memoranda, and sketched his "Faust," of which unhappily only the sketch has been handed down to posterity.

In 1762, after the conclusion of the peace, Lessing was introduced to Frederick the Great at Potsdam, but nothing remarkable can be reported of the interview, nor did

anything particular accrue from it to Lessing. In 1766 he published his "Laokoon," a dissertation on the limits of Poetry and Painting; and in 1767 his play "Minna von Barnhelm" was printed, and acted in the following year. "Minna von Barnhelm" was obviously conceived under the influence of the Prussian sons of Mars, and is pronounced by many as Lessing's best play.

Already in 1766 Lessing had become acquainted with a number of theatrical dillettanti in Hamburg, who invited him thither, to take an active share in the foundation of a theatre for the performance of classical plays. Lessing accordingly removed to Hamburg, where that enterprise was started, but through the petty jealousies of its amateur directors soon broke down. It was on the occasion and for the benefit of these dramatic performances that Lessing published his "Hamburg Dramaturgy," a critical periodical, which is collected in two volumes.

At this time Lessing suffered himself to be persuaded into a partnership in a printing office; but being thoroughly the man of letters, and not at all the man of business, he had soon to give up this position.

In Hamburg Lessing also became a Freemason.

His next design was a journey to Rome, on the antiquities of which he intended to write. In order to obtain the means for such a purpose, he disposed of the last select remains of his library; but, after paying his debts, he had scarcely enough left to cover the expenses of a single year. At this critical and hopeless period of his life, a noble-hearted and generous prince, the Hereditary Prince Leopold of Brunswick, stepped in for him, put an end to his exigencies, and at once placed him in a position where his genius, in undisturbed activity and development, rapidly ascending, arrived at its point of culmination. The Prince appointed him successor to Leibnitz as Librarian in Wolfenbüttel. The offer was made in the most delicate

and flattering manner, and sufficient pecuniary means were immediately placed at his command. Nothing in the world could have suited him better. In a letter to his father he says: "The appointment is just such as the ingenuity of friendship would have invented for me. The Prince has been more desirous to make the library useful to me, than me to the library."

A short time afterwards Lessing made a successful proposal to the Widow Koenig in Hamburg. During this courtship he met Herder, with whom he became connected by most intimate friendship.

Lessing's Librarianship soon made itself known by publications well calculated to delight the enlightened, to terrify intolerant bigotry and hackneyed formalism, and to create an intense sensation in the reading world in general.

There was a collection of 6000 Manuscripts in the Wolfenbüttel library. Lessing undertook a periodical publication entitled "Contributions to Literary History," which included extracts from the most remarkable of those Manuscripts, with comments of learned correspondents. One of the first articles being a work of Berengarius of Tours, written in the eleventh century, and opposing Consubstantiation to Transubstantiation, caused a storm of controversies between Catholics and Lutherans. Lessing in his analysis tended rather to the orthodox than to the heterodox party, perhaps unwittingly leaning to the side of preponderating learning. In 1771 he published a new edition of his miscellaneous works. Ramler revised the proofs, and had full power to correct and to suppress. On the 13th of March, 1773, being the birthday of the Dowager Duchess of Brunswick, "Emilia Galotti" was acted for the first time. This tragedy would be matchless in composition, diction, and delineament of characters; but the fifth act too much betrays the hurry with which it was written.

Lessing next published dissertations on a female Torso which stood in the Wolfenbüttel Library, on the mode in which Greek sculptors personified Death, and on the antiquity of oil-painting. He consulted the Prince about the publication of the notorious "Fragments by an Anonymous Writer," and the Prince giving his permission, Lessing published them in the "*Contributions*," and so gave birth to that long and violent controversy which made all Germany seethe with theological polemics. There were many who considered Lessing the author of the "Fragments," but it is an ascertained fact that they were written by Reimarus of Hamburg.

Lessing attempted a new classification of the books of the Library, and in doing so he highly displeased the Chancellor von Praun, who was the nominal superintendent of the Library, and who considered this proceeding as an encroachment upon his rights, and as an attempt to supersede him in office. Mendelssohn, who came on a visit, and found Lessing busily engaged with his task, found fault with his condescending to Antiquarian details, and tried to divert his attention from works of Industry to works of Art. Lessing, whose mind had always a tendency to vacillation, began to feel tired of his drudgery and of the life of a learned hermit. After Mendelssohn's departure he fell into a hypochondriac, splenetic, caustic state of temper, of which he had always shown symptoms, and for which Nature had taught him to seek a counterpoise in travel.

It was at that time that the son of the Empress Maria Theresa, afterwards the Emperor Joseph II. of Austria, conceived the plan of founding an Academy in Vienna, which should rival that of Berlin. But the intellectual state of Austria not furnishing Academicians, he suggested to his mother to induce men of letters from abroad to take up their abode in Vienna, and as soon as there was a sufficient number of them, to set up the Academy. Professor

Sulger was the recruiting sergeant for this learned army, and having learned from Mendelssohn the restlessness of Lessing's spirit, he obtained Lessing's permission to mention his name at Vienna. Lessing was so much more induced to make Vienna his future residence, as his betrothed wife possessed property in that city. However, the plan for the Academy was not carried out, as the orthodox Empress shrunk from the idea of making her Capital the place of meeting of such a number of Free-thinkers. But the fact of Lessing's consent was rumoured about, and reached the ears of the Chancellor von Praun, who communicated it to the Hereditary Prince. The Prince, naturally enough, was not much pleased with the news, and a coolness towards Lessing ensued, which Praun took good care gradually to render incurable. There had been a design to promote Lessing to the rank of Historiographer to the House of Brunswick, with a view of increasing his salary, and finally conferring on him the title of Aulic Councillor. But Praun's successful postponement of the appointment, salary, and title, convinced Lessing that the Prince was no longer his warm friend.

In March 1775 he travelled to Berlin, where several offers were made to him, which however he declined. Thence he went to Vienna, where he married Madame Koenig. But the noble-minded Prince, in spite of the machinations of Praun, and in spite of the offence he received from a man, whose generous protector he had become just in the height of his calamities, still warmed again into the old friendship for Lessing, whose inquiry at the Vienna Court he ascribed to a natural longing for change, peculiar to a character like Lessing's. He did not know then what an influence Lessing's matrimonial arrangements had exercised on his resolution to remove to Vienna. The Prince, remembering Lessing's favourite

plan of visiting Rome, obtained from his father permission to travel, suddenly made his appearance in Vienna, and proposed to Lessing a tour through Italy. Lessing gladly consented, and both parties were well satisfied; Lessing with the final realisation of his long-cherished plan; and the Prince with his succeeding in snatching Lessing from the Empress. Previously to their departure Lessing had an audience with the Empress, who asked his opinion about the state of intelligence in Austria, and made him—and not the Prince—the bearer of letters of introduction to Count Firmian in Milan, thus taking a noble and elegant revenge on the Prince. On the 25th of April, 1775, they set out for Italy, and after having visited somewhat hastily the seats of Art, they arrived in the middle of December of the following year at Munich, where they parted. During Lessing's absence his wife had died of a miscarriage.

As soon as the fact of Lessing's definite settlement with the Prince of Brunswick become known, several German Sovereigns began to envy him his conquest. In 1776 Lessing visited Dresden. The Elector requested an interview, and inquired where Lessing was born. "I was born a subject of your Highness."—"That I knew, and that you have found it eligible to settle out of your country; but if you choose to return to it, you will not regret the step, if you will inform me of your determination." From a subordinate quarter the prospect was held out to him of becoming the successor of Hagedorn, whose age and infirmities made a speedy vacancy probable.

From Mannheim also, splendid offers were made to him —a seat as Academician, and the office of Dramatist and Director of the new National Theatre. The Elector, to whom he was introduced, offered to him the Curatorship of the University of Heidelberg, which would have endowed

him with a salary of 2000 dollars per annum; but Lessing, holding himself bound to the House of Brunswick, declined all these offers, alluring as they were. In 1778 the Consistory of Brunswick interfered, and caused the cessation of the "*Contributions*." The ire of priestcraft had reached such a pitch, and the controversies assumed such dimensions, that Lessing found himself compelled to print some defensive replies. The unpublished portion of the manuscript, with the exception of a few leaves retained by the Prince, were compulsorily delivered up to the Magistrate. Lessing at last closed the controversy by the publication of "Nathan the Wise."

In 1780, the Duke of Brunswick died, and Prince Leopold succeeded to the throne; and Lessing's protector was now a reigning Sovereign. The Chanceller von Praun was discarded, and Lessing, the abused and calumniated latitudinarian, the anti-christian monster and impious atheist, as soon as it was perceived that he influenced the advancement of the clergy, suddenly became their idol, and was praised as a model of morality, and an apostle of true religious sentiments. Under such circumstances his dissertation "On the Education of the Human Race," a work averse to Positive Religion, could be printed without impediment, and was read without anger.

Lessing, gradually succumbing under his excessive mental efforts, at last became too solicitous about his health, and certainly overvalued his physical strength, and tended to over-tax his creative powers, when contracting yearly to supply the Hamburg Theatre with two new plays. He never fulfilled this contract. His routine was, to work at Wolfenbüttel, and occasionally to pass a few weeks at Brunswick for recreation. But becoming latterly very lethargic, he was seldom able to enjoy the comfort and honours which his princely protector prepared for him so profusely.

Among the friends of his latter days, we have to men-

tion his college friend Zachariæ; the Consistorial Councillor Schmidt, suspected to have assisted in providing the "Fragments;" Ebert, the bearer of the Prince's original offer to Lessing; Eschenburg, the translator of "Shakespeare," &c.

In 1781, he went to Hamburg, where he arrived in such a state of illness, that his friend Leisewitz (the author of "Julius of Torento") sent for medical assistance, but the efforts of the physicians were in vain. To his comatose symptoms was added a decay of voice, and on the 15th of February he expired.

Many were the obituary panegyrics occasioned by the demise of this most remarkable man, but we only quote the words of Mendelssohn, relating to the occasion: "*He leaves no descendants, but a more surely enduring memorial: he wrote Nathan the Wise, and died!*"

Such is the biography of the man, to whom is due the undisputed honour of having been the Reformer and Regenerator of the National Literature of Germany. His vast and manysided scholarship obtained for him the name of "the German Aristotle," and his prominent reformatory merits History rewarded with the epithet of "the Luther of German Literature." Frederick the Great prepared the soil for this Literary Reformation, but the Reformation itself is exclusively Lessing's work. In the same manner as formerly Luther, supported by enthusiasm for Truth, and with utmost self-negation, made himself the victorious leader of the host of religious warriors; so Lessing, inspired by the same enthusiasm, and with the same self-denial, gathered around himself the few timid champions for the cause of vernacular Literature, and augmented their number to a conquering army. The irresistible weapon he brandished was: *Truth;* his motto: "*Freedom of Thought,*" and his conquest: "*the Liberty of Germans to think, speak, and write German.*"

A mere glance at his biography shows us, that ever and anon he repaired to those places where the wells of striving intellect and regenerating life broke forth the purest and the freshest; and this proves the rightness of his peculiar spiritual instinct. So, if we find him, now in Leipzig, and now in Berlin; and then again as a Literary knight-errant between Wittenberg, Berlin, and Breslau; and again in Hamburg, indefatigably exerting himself in his reformatory work, until at last the roving vessel of his enterprise rides at anchor in the calm harbour of the Wolfenbüttel Library; and if even thence we see him roused, haunted by his never-satiated avidity for fresh activity, starting for other temporary wanderings, for other exploring expeditions into the unknown regions of Literature and Art; if we watch the manifold modes in which he busies himself at many places; his dealing with all branches of Literature; his courageously facing ignorance, and abuses in criticism and polemics, — now attacking, and now defending; now reasoning as a Philosopher and Theorist, and now illustrating as a Poet; stating his views in periodicals, and lending his powerful aid to the "Letters on Literature;"—if we see him dwelling on all questions appertaining to human science, and at the same time systematically developing new principles in particular treatises;—and if moreover, wherever he be, and whatever his subject, we invariably find him *at the question;*—and if with respect *to* the question, we find both the most important and the most trifling things equally recognized and regarded by him—there we have a true psychological picture of the man; a picture, which in spite of the apparent diffusion of effect, on a close examination still displays the purest symmetry and harmony, rigorous system and consistency, and which renders the personal physiognomy of Lessing the mirror of his century, with its general spirit of inquiry and progress.

Lessing's leading principle was: *to seek Truth for the sake of Truth;* and in all his writings—in "Nathan the Wise" especially—this great principle, supported by unexampled learning, by overwhelming powers of argument, by a high-soaring genius, by an unflinching will, and by that courage which springs only from pure enthusiasm for Truth,—is set forth with extraordinary power and effect. "The great secret," he says, "to raise the human Soul to perfection by means of practice, solely consists in keeping it in the practice of acceding to Truth through our own reflection."

When Lessing made his appearance in the Literary world of Germany, the National problem consisted in doing away with the literary heirlooms of ignorant and enslaved past generations, and to establish new and sound principles, as a basis for the wished-for development of the spirit of reform and progress. Such a work required not so much a man of productive originality, but much more a man of profound intelligence, and of an acute, philosophical, and critical spirit; and Lessing was just the man in whom these requisites were happily combined.

Lessing soon perceived that a regeneration of German Literature depended chiefly on two conditions: on the acquirement by the German Nation of the æsthetic independence of principles; and on the proper appreciation of the National Existence. Already Wieland and Klopstock, and afterwards Lessing's own associates Nicolay and Mendelssohn, made some efforts to this end. They criticized, praised, blamed, they touched on special points; but all their efforts remained patch-work, since they had neither the qualifications nor the energy to subject Literature as a whole to consideration; to take a fixed point of view, and thence to pass judgment and to dictate laws. It was reserved for Lessing to take such a general critical view of things, to point out the good with fearlessness,

and inexorably to arraign the evil before the tribunal of Public Opinion. He was equally fit and ready for the hardships of the combat, and for the legislation of peace. He humbled the haughtiness of scholastic wisdom; emancipated German pedantry from its ridiculous excessive cautiousness; he put to shame the arrogant importunity of the learned and orthodox Sophists; and exposed to ridicule the insipid and talkative self-complaisance of Mediocrity displayed in prose and verse. Clearness of Thought and precision of Form, and the former to support and imbue the latter,—was the principal maxim he laid down for composition.

The great reformatory movement began with the publication of the "Letters on Literature" (1759–65), that learned journal purporting to combat againstevery thing obsolete, against mediocrity, and particularly against shallowness. "In the Learned Republic shallow fellows cannot be used even as common labourers," such was the motto expressed in one of these critical letters. The "Letters on Literature" became the nucleus of Lessing's literary power. From them the origin of free independent criticism is dated, and well might Herder say of them: "the Fountain of good taste is opened; people need only come and drink."

Lessing's reformatory call and profound literary understanding are most strikingly manifested in his directing his critical activity first and principally to the Theatre. "The stage, which means the world," is not only the mirror of life, but also a school of morals. It is in Germany much more so than anywhere else, and just at that period the stage exercised a more powerful influence on public morality and public taste than in many a subsequent era. There was the tyranny of the French drama to be annihilated, and the sway of William Shakespeare to be proclaimed and maintained. Lessing made himself master of

this commanding position in the literary field, and from thence influenced and governed all branches of intellect. The Hamburg "Dramaturgy," the "Letters on Literature," "Laokoon," &c. were the powerful levers with which he handled the colossal uncut block of undeveloped taste and superficial intelligence, and shaped it after his own ideal. Of the "Laokoon," Herder says, "that the three Graces of human knowledge had accomplished it, namely, the Muses of Philosophy, of Poetry, and of the Production of the Beautiful."

We might ask, what was Lessing's real vocation?—for he was neither Philosopher nor Philologist, neither Theologian nor Literary Historian. The fact is, he combined in himself all these qualities, to which were superadded that capacity of judgment, consciousness of power, and eminence of an elastic and strong spirit, which rendered him a competent authority on any question in the above-named branches of learning and intellect—in a word, his real vocation was the *Critic;* and if Herder calls him the greatest Critic in Germany, he only does him justice.

It is usual with Germans to have Lessing reckoned not only amongst the German Poets, but even amongst the *great* Poets of the Fatherland, although in this respect the grateful enthusiasm of his countrymen oversteps the mark, and combines Lessing's merits in poetry and Lessing's poetical productions in *one* result, bringing it under the head of Poetry. Lessing was not a Poet in the rigorous sense of the word. *Poeta nascitur, non fit.* Lessing's poetical productions are not the effusions of an innate, but of an acquired, talent; they are more or less only illustrations of his critical principles, as it were the practical records of his philosophical criticism. Lessing himself says: "I am neither Actor nor Poet. I find myself sometimes honoured with the title of the latter, but this is only because people misjudge me. From the few dramatic

attempts which I have ventured, people ought not to draw such liberal inferences. Not everybody who takes up a brush, and mixes colours, is a Painter. The earliest of those my attempts are written down at an age when a good will and ease are willingly mistaken for genius. Of the tolerable things contained in my later attempts, I am aware that I am indebted for them solely and exclusively to criticism; I do not feel within myself that living fountain, which through its own power rushes upwards in such abundant, fresh, and pure streams; I must squeeze out everything through a forcing pump and pipes. I should be so poor, so cold, so short-sighted, had I not learned discreetly to borrow from the treasuries of others; to warm myself by the fire of others, and to strengthen my eyes through the medium of Art. Therefore I always felt shame or vexation whenever I read or heard anything derogatory to Criticism. They describe it as something which damps genius; but I flatter myself that I am endowed by it with something which comes near to Genius. I am a lame man, who can by no means feel edified by a libel on crutches."

We deem this the proper place for offering a few remarks on Lessing as a man and a Christian. He belonged to that kind of men, about whom we cannot obtain a correct judgment, unless we have a very close knowledge of all their peculiarities of character, manners, and intellectual attainments. His virtues and excellencies do not appear in their full light, and cannot be fully appreciated, if not considered in their connexion and relation to the whole of his personality. Goethe says about him: "he would easily part with his personal dignity, because he was persuaded that he could resume it at any moment; the powerful working of his mind always required a counterpoise." He did not care so much for a definite task as for employment in general. One of the principal features of his character

was Humanity, such as is depicted in Greek antiquity, and afforded in the purest principles of Christianity. This Humanity he pronounced the Alpha and Omega of all Literary Education. As already observed, "*Truth*" was his philosopher's stone, and he deemed the seeking for it its own ample reward. The spirit of Inquiry was all-important with him. "Truth," he said, "supported by shallow reasons, is prejudice; and is not less derogatory than downright error, nay, oftentimes still more so. For such a prejudice leads to laziness in research, and destroys the spirit of inquiry." Another remarkable feature of his character was *Tolerance*. "It was obviously peculiar to his character"—writes Mendelssohn—"to take the part of any persecuted doctrine, no matter whether it answered his own views or not, and he would exert his utmost sagacity, in order to offer an additional argument for its justification."

As a Philosopher he did not belong to any of the "Schools." He was a devoted servant of the "Philosophical Idea" without defining it, so that he might meet with it wherever and in whatever peculiar form it might be. Jacobi, who called him a Sceptic and a disciple of Spinoza, was as wrong as Mendelssohn, who died with grief about the latter insinuation made concerning his deceased friend.

With philosophical freedom, Lessing elevated himself to the heights of Protestantism, not so much for the sake of the dogma, as for the principle of free subjective conviction. He shrunk alike from the orthodox and from the hyper-rational party. "What do I care for the Orthodox?" he writes to Jacobi. "I despise them as much as thou dost." Again he writes with reference to the Rationalists: "I am persuaded that these shallow heads, if allowed to obtain superiority, will in time tyrannize over us more than the Orthodox ever did."

The words of Professor Grimm in Berlin, spoken with

respect to Schiller's religious views, on the occasion of the late Centenary, may well be applied also to Lessing: "As to the soundness of his religious belief, it was sheer impertinence on the part of a certain class to reproach him with infidelity. There was religion without the manifestation of it in an orthodox form; and a man, whose heart had been filled with the love of the pure, the beautiful, and the good, ought never to be regarded in the light of an atheist or a heathen."

Lessing's principal writings being cursorily mentioned and briefly surveyed, and the space of these pages not allowing of a complete index and a detailed criticism, we shall confine ourselves to a few observations on the celebrated play, the translation of which forms the contents of this book.

In "Nathan the Wise" Lessing erected for himself a *monumentum ære perennius*, which will last as long as human heads will think, and human hearts will feel.

"Nathan the Wise" is, as it were, Lessing's last will, in which he bequeathed to the future world that sum of Truth which he acquired in the long and hard struggles of his life. And he took good care to render this his testament *legible* to all mankind; for though the work is a production of Occidental art, still nearly all the characters introduced, and the sphere and the mode of their thoughts and actions, are Asiatic; and through their original simplicity and the freedom in their discourse and manners, they impart to the play a somewhat scripture-like intelligibleness. There is no doubt that the choice of the subject, characters, and circumstances, was the happiest Lessing could make for the attainment of his end. The Jew Nathan, representing the most sincere religious devotion, and the most refined benevolent sentiments, in their purest patriarchal originality, occupies the centre of the picture. Next to him we see the noble-hearted Sultan Saladin, a Mussulman, consulting a Jew as an oracle of Truth, and correcting with

loving gentleness the errors of a Christian. The Templar, personifying the mediæval Romance of Religion, completes the Trio, and these three men, so widely differing in the form of their creeds, still unconsciously unite in the doing of a pious work — in preserving Recha; thus teaching the great lesson of *Tolerance*, which is the chief object of the work.

The first glance at the work shows us, that it is rather a production of philosophical and religious reflection, than of inventive imagination. It is a dissertation on Truth in a dramatic form. It appears that Lessing, in adopting this form, intended to render the work more intelligible and palatable to the many.

There is a general supposition that Moses Mendelssohn sat as model for the drawing of the character of Nathan. We are not of this opinion, and rather inclined to believe, that the model for Nathan was one of those wealthy Israelite Berlin Merchants (Veitel, Heine, &c.) whose names are gloriously preserved in the charitable and learned institutions which they founded in Berlin, and who used to have money-transactions with Frederick the Great, of whom the character of "Saladin" reminds us not a little.

There is another erroneous statement with regard to the celebrated Parable of the three Rings, the invention of which is generally ascribed to Bocaccio. Of this so much is truth, that the Parable is really contained in the third Novel of Bocaccio's "*Decamerone*," from which novel Lessing avowedly derived the first idea of his "Nathan the Wise;" but Bocaccio is not the author of the Parable. Manni, in his "*Istoria del Camerone*," states that Bocaccio borrowed this narrative from the "*Novellino Antico*," which is a collection of novels, more generally known under the title of "*Cento Novelle Antiche.*" A similar story is also related in the "*Gesta Romanorum*," a work which, according to Graesse, was composed in the thirteenth

century. But the real origin of the Parable must be traced back to a Hebrew work by Solomon aben Verga, the "*Shevet Jehuda*," probably printed in Constantinople about the year 1550. There are only *two* rings introduced, alluding to the Jewish and Christian religions.

The Translator, in presenting the following translation of "Nathan the Wise" to the English reader, has to add only a few words.

In undertaking this translation, he was well aware of the numberless difficulties thrown in his way, consisting in the first place, in the general and natural difficulty of producing a literal, faithful, and metrical translation, wherein the genius of both idioms is equally regarded, and where the original Author is faithfully represented in his peculiarity of thought and expression. The second and extraordinary difficulty arose from Lessing's propensity to display his power as a linguistic athlete; now handling the grave forms of the German idiom as a Cyclops would handle colossal masses of rock; mastering the stupendous blocks, and forcing them into formations according to his will or whim;—and now again playing with the forms of the language like a dexterous juggler with glittering silver-balls. His elliptic sentences, laconisms, and transpositions; his way of employing tenses, particles, &c.; and above all, his puns, else the most inferior kind of witticism, but which he elevated to the rank of real wit,—are so many whirlpools, which keep the Translator in constant peril between the Scylla "Impossibility" and the Charybdis "Misrepresentation."

This account of the difficulties which had to be overcome, will not be considered, we hope, as anything else but what it really is: *as a claim to the reader's indulgence for the deficiencies of the Translation.*

THE TRANSLATOR.

London, January, 1860.

Dramatis Personæ.

SULTAN SALADIN.

SITTAH, *his sister.*

NATHAN, *a rich Jew of Jerusalem.*

RECHA, *his adopted daughter.*

DAJAH, *a Christian woman, but living in the house of the Jew, as Recha's companion.*

A young KNIGHT TEMPLAR.

A DERVISE.

A PATRIARCH *of Jerusalem.*

A FRIAR.

An EMIR, *and several* MAMELUKES *of Saladin.*

THE SCENE IS IN JERUSALEM.

Nathan the Wise.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

(SCENE: *A Hall in Nathan's House.*)

NATHAN, *returning from a journey;* DAJAH, *meeting him.*

Dajah.

'Tis he! 'Tis Nathan! Praised be God for ever,
That, after all, you do return at last!

Nathan.

Yes, Dajah; praised be God! But why *at last?*
Was it my wish, then, to return ere now?
And was it in my power? Babylon
Is from Jerusalem,—as I've been forc'd
To turn off from my road, now right, now left—
A distance of a good two hundred leagues.
And debt-collecting, too, is surely not
A task much apt to speed one's journey home,
Which can be treated so off-hand.

Dajah.

Oh Nathan,
How miserable, miserable could you
Have meanwhile here become! Your house...

Nathan.

Was burning;
So I have heard already. May God grant,
I may have heard already all of it!

Dajah.

And might have easily burnt to the ground.

Nathan.

In that case, Dajah, we had built a new,
More comfortable one.

Dajah.

That's right enough!—
But Recha had but one hair's-breadth escape
From being burnt.

Nathan.

Burnt? who? my Recha? she?
This I heard not.—If so, indeed I would
Not then have wanted any house.—A hair's-breadth
Escape from burning!—Ha! perhaps she is—
Is actually burnt, perhaps!—Speak out!
Out with it!—Kill me; and do not torment
Me longer.—Yes, she is burnt.

Dajah.

If she were,
Would it be me, from whom you were to hear it?

Nathan.

What is the reason, then, that thou alarm'st me?
Oh Recha! Oh my Recha!

Dajah.

Your? Your Recha?

Nathan.

What, should I e'er be driven to unlearn,
To call this child *my* child!

Dajah.

Do you call all,
Which you possess, your own by equal right?

Nathan.

Nought with a better. All that, which besides
I do possess, has Nature and good Fortune
Bestow'd on me. This only property
I owe to Virtue.

Dajah.

Oh, how dearly, Nathan,
Do you oblige me to requite your goodness!
If goodness, exercised with such intention,
Can goodness still be call'd!

Nathan.

With such intention?
With what?

Dajah.

My conscience...

Nathan.

Let me, Dajah, first
Before all other things, describe...

Dajah.

My conscience,
I say...

Nathan.

What a fine woven stuff I have
In Babylon selected for thy use;—
So rich, and tastefully so rich! For Recha
Herself I hardly bring a finer one.

Dajah.

To what avail? For I'm obliged to tell you,
My conscience now will be no longer hushed.

Nathan.

And how the ornaments, and how the ear-rings,
How ring and chain will satisfy thee, which
I have selected for thee in Damascus,
I do desire to know.

Dajah.

That is your way!
If you can but make presents! can make presents!

Nathan.

Take thou as freely as I give:—and rest!

Dajah.

And rest!—Who questions, Nathan, that you are
Uprightness, generosity itself?
And still...

Nathan.

Still I'm a Jew with all that,—Truly,
That is thy meaning?

Dajah.

What my meaning is
You best know.

Nathan.

Then be silent.

Dajah.

I am silent.
Whate'er, that's punishable before God,
Here is committed, which I cannot—cannot
Help or amend,—that come on you!

Nathan.

On me!
But where is she? Where does she tarry?—Dajah,
What, if thou dost deceive me!—Does she know
That I'm arriv'd?

Dajah.

That I do ask of you!
Still terror makes her every nerve to tremble.
Her fancy still is adding hue of fire
To all it paints. Her soul wakes while she is
Asleep; sleeps while she is awake: now less
Than brute, now more than angel.

Nathan.

Ah! poor child!
What are we mortals?

Dajah.

'Twas this morning, when
She lay a long while with closed eyes, appearing
Dead. Suddenly she starts and cries: "Hark! hark!
There are the camels of my father coming!
Hark! there is his own gentle voice!" Meanwhile,
Her eyes again were growing dim; her head,
In vain expecting his supporting arm,
Droop'd on the pillow.—Out of doors I ran!
And lo! there you came really! you came really!—

What wonder! her whole soul has ever since
Been only with yourself—and him.—

Nathan.

With him?

What him?

Dajah.

With him, who from amidst the fire
Did rescue her.

Nathan.

Who was it? who?—Where is he?
Who has preserved to me my Recha? who?

Dajah.

A youthful Templar, who a few days since,
Was brought into this city as a captive,
And who by Saladin was pardoned.

Nathan.

What?

A Templar, to whom Sultan Saladin
Did grant his life? Through no less miracle
Could Recha be preserved? God!

Dajah.

Without him,
Who hazarded his unexpected boon
Afresh, it would have been all over with her.

Nathan.

Where, Dajah, is that noble-minded man?
Where is he? Do conduct me to his feet.
I hope you gave him, for the first, what treasures
I left with you? you gave him everything?
And promised more? much more?

Dajah.

How could we do so?

Nathan.

Not? Not?

Dajah.

He came; but whence, nobody knows.
He went; but whither, no one knows.—Without
All knowledge of the house, and guided only
By ear, he with his mantle spread before him,
Press'd boldly through the flames and smoke, to where
The voice call'd us for help. We thought him lost
Already, when from smoke and flame emerging
At once he stood before us; his strong arm
Upholding her. Cold and unmov'd by all
Our clam'rous thanks, he puts his booty down,
Obtains by force a passage through the throng,
And—disappears!

Nathan.

But not, I hope, for ever.

Dajah.

For some days after this event we saw
Him walking up and down beneath the palm-trees,
That shade the grave of Him, who rose from death.
I did approach him with delight. I thank'd,
I prais'd, I bade, adjur'd,—but once again
To see the pious creature, who could find
No rest, until before his feet she pour'd
In floods of tears her grateful feelings.

Nathan.

Well?

Dajah.

In vain! He turn'd a deaf ear to our suit;
And pour'd such bitter scorn, on me the most...

Nathan.

That hence discouraged...

Dajah.

Nothing of the kind!
I did accost him every day anew;
And every day anew I suffered scorn.
How much I suffer'd from him! How much more
I willingly had suffer'd!—But for some
Time past he comes no more the palms to visit,
That shade the tomb of our Arisen One:
And no one knows the place where he abides.
You wonder? you reflect?

Nathan.

I do consider,
What kind of an impression that may work
Upon a spirit such as Recha's. Finding
Herself so scorn'd by him, whom to esteem,
So strongly she feels urged. Thus to be
Repell'd, and still so much attracted.—Sooth!
There heart and head must long time quarrel, whether
Misanthropy shall conquer, or dejection.
And often neither does prevail, and Fancy,
Which mingles in the strife, makes visionaries,
With whom the head must act now as the heart,
And now again the heart as head.—Sad change!—
The latter, if I do not err in Recha,
Is Recha's case: she's visionary.

Dajah.

But

So pious, lovely!

Nathan.

Is still visionary!

Dajah.

Especially one—whim, if so you call it,
She's very fondly cherishing;—her Templar
To be no mortal, nor of what is mortal;
One of those angels, to whose guard, from childhood,
Her little heart believed itself so gladly
To be confided, had from 'midst his cloud,
That veil'd him ever, e'en while in the fire
He round her hovered, in a Templar's form
At once stepp'd forward.—Do not smile!—Who knows?
Indulge her, smiling, but with one illusion,
In which the Christian, Jew, and Mussulman
Meet one another; such a sweet illusion!

Nathan.

So sweet to me, too!—Go, good Dajah, go;
Learn, how she's doing; whether I can see her.
Then I will go in search of that untamed
Capricious guardian angel. And if still
He pleases to sojourn among us; still
He pleases thus uncivilly to practise
His chivalry: I'll find him out, and bring
Him hither.

Dajah.

Much you undertake.

Nathan.

And if
That sweet illusion yields to sweeter truth,—
For, after all, believe me Dajah, man
Is to a man still dearer than an angel,—
I hope, that thou wilt not be angry with me,
To see the angel-visionary cured?

Dajah.

You are so good, and are so evil yet!
I go!—But hark!—but see!—Here comes herself.

SCENE II.

RECHA. NATHAN. DAJAH.

Recha.

Is it indeed your very self, my father?
I thought, you only sent your voice before
Yourself. Where have you stay'd? What are the mountains,
The deserts, what the torrents, that divide
Us still? You're breathing side by side with her,
And do not hasten to embrace your Recha?
Poor Recha, who meanwhile was burnt alive!
Burnt almost! merely almost! Do not shudder.
It is a horrid death, to burn. Alas!

Nathan.

My child! My darling child!

Recha.

You were to cross
The Tigris, the Euphrates, Jordan; the—
Who knows what other rivers?—Oh, how often
I trembled for you, ere the fire had touch'd me
So near! For ever since the fire has touch'd me
So close, a death by water seems to me
Refreshment, comfort, rescue.—But you are
Not drown'd indeed; I am indeed not burnt.
How joyful will we be, and praising God;
Aye God! He, he did bear you and the skiff
Upon the wings of his *invisible*
Angels across those treacherous rivers. He,
He beckoned to my angel, *visibly*
To come and carry me on his white wing
Athwart the fire.

Nathan.

(*Aside.*) On his white wing! Aye, aye!
The Templar Knight's white mantle, which he spread
Before him.

Recha.

Visibly, nay visibly
Athwart the fire to bear me, by his wing
O'ershadow'd.—Therefore I, I did behold
An angel face to face, and *my own* angel.

Nathan.

'Tis but what Recha would deserve; and she
Would see in him no fairer sight, than he
In her.

Recha.

Whom flatter you, my father? whom?
The angel, or yourself?

Nathan.

And yet, if only
A man, one such as Nature every day
Affords, had serv'd thee in this way; an angel
He should appear to thee. He should and would.

Recha.

Not such an angel; no! he was a real one;
Indeed he was a real one!—Did you not
Teach me yourself, it might be possible,
That there are angels—that God in behalf
Of them, who love Him, would work miracles?
And I do love Him.

Nathan.

And He loves thee, and
Works always wonders for thee and thy kind;
Nay, has already worked them for you, from
Eternity.

Recha.

I love to hear that.

Nathan.

What!
Because all natural, all common-place
It sounded, if a real Knight Templar had
Preserved thee: should it for that reason be
Less wonderful?—The greatest of all wonders
Is, that to us the real true wonders can
Become so common-place, and must become so.

Without this universal wonder, would
A man of thought have hardly ever styled
A wonder, what but children ought to name so,
Who, gaping, only watch the things that are
Most strange, and novelties.

Dajah.

Is it your will,
Wholly to burst her brains—o'er-agitated
As they already are—by subtleties
Like these?

Nathan.

Let me alone!—Is't not enough
A wonder to my Recha, that a man
Did save her, who, to save himself, required
No little wonder? Aye no little wonder!
For who, indeed, has heard that Saladin
Had ever spared a Templar! that a Templar
Had ever ask'd, or ever hoped, to be
Spared by him? or had ever offered for
His liberty more than the leathern belt,
Which bears his sword? or, at the most, his dagger?

Recha.

That proves for me, my father.—Just for that,
He was no Templar, he did but appear so.—
If to Jerusalem there never comes
A captured Templar, but to certain death;
None wanders in Jerusalem so freely
About: how then could one be free at night
To save me?

Nathan.

Look there, how ingenious!

Now Dajah, 'tis thy place to speak. From thee
I have the fact, that hither he was sent
As captive. Doubtless, more thou know'st of him.

Dajah.

Aye, well.—'Tis true they say so; but they say
At the same time, that Saladin did pardon
The Templar for his very strong resemblance
To one dear brother, whom he greatly loved.
But as much more than twenty years have passed,
Since this his brother died;—I cannot tell
What was his name;—he fell, I know not where:—
So all this really sounds so very—very
Incredible, that sure the whole is fiction.

Nathan.

Well, Dajah! Pray, and why should this be so
Incredible? Not—as it often happens—
To credit rather something that is still
Less credible?—Why should the Sultan, who
So dearly loves his brothers and his sisters,
Not have loved in his younger years one brother
Especially? Do we not find two faces
Often resemble one another?—Is
An old impression lost?—Does the same cause
Produce no longer the same consequence?—
Since when?—What then is here incredible?—
Aye, true, wise Dajah, it would cease, to thee
To be a wonder; and *thy* wonders only
Requi—deserve belief, I mean to say.

Dajah.

You're mocking.

Nathan.

That is for thy mocking me.—
Still, Recha, even so explained, thy rescue
Remains a wonder, possible alone
To Him who loves to guide by slender threads
The firmest wills, the boldest plans of kings,
Which are his sport—perhaps his mock.—

Recha.

My father!
My father, if I err, you know I do not
Love erring.

Nathan.

Much more, thou preferr'st instruction.
Look here: a forehead vaulted thus, or thus;
A nose, that's bowed this way rather than
The other way; eyebrows, meandering
Themselves upon a keen bone, or a straight one,
In this way, or the other way; a line,
A curve, an angle, wrinkle, spot, a nothing
Upon a savage European's face:—
And thou art rescued from the fire in Asia!
And, wonder-gatherers! this should be no wonder?
What need have you to trouble still an angel?

Dajah.

What does it harm—If, Nathan, I may speak—
In spite of all this, rather to imagine,
To be saved by an angel, than by man?
Do we not feel ourselves so much the nearer
To the first unintelligible cause
Of our escape?

Nathan.

Pride, utter pride! The pot
Of iron-ore loves to be lifted from
The furnace by a silver-prong, that it
May think itself a pot of silver.—Pah!—
And what it harms, thou askest? what it harms?
What does it speed? I only need to ask.
For thy "to feel to God so much the nearer"
Is either nonsense or is blasphemy.—
But it does harm; yes, by all means, it harms.—
Come! listen both.—Is it so? To the being
That saved thee—be it angel, or be it
A man—you gladly would, thou singularly,
Return important services, and many?—
Is that so?—Well, what service could you render,
Aye, what important service, to an angel?
You may give thanks, send up your sighs, may pray;
May melt away o'er him in ecstasy;
May fast on that day which he celebrates;
Spend alms.—All to no purpose. For I can
Not help believing, that you and your neighbour
Will gain much more by it than he. Not he
Grows fat, if you do fast; becomes not rich
Through what you spend; becomes more glorious neither
Through your transport; his might is not exalted
Through your belief. But diff'rent 'tis with man.

Dajah.

Aye, true; a man had furnished us with more
Occasion, anything *to do* for him.

And God knows how prepared we were for that!
But, to be sure, he wish'd, he wanted nothing
So positively; was with his own self,
And through it, so content, as only angels
Are, or can be.

Recha.

And then when he did vanish—

Nathan.

Did vanish?—How did vanish?—No more was
Seen underneath the palm-trees?—How? or have you
Inquired already elsewhere after him?

Dajah.

Not just so much.

Nathan.

Not, Dajah? not?—Look there,
What harm it does!—Ye cruel visionaries!—
What, if this angel—if he had grown sick!—

Recha.

Sick!

Dajah.

Sick! Sure he has not!

Recha.

How cold a horror
Pervades me!—Dajah!—There, my forehead, else
So warm, feel! turned at once to ice.

Nathan.

He is
A Frank, and not accustomed to this climate;
Is young; to those hard works of his profession,
To fasting, watching, not inured.

Recha.

Sick! sick!

Dajah.

It might be so, means Nathan but to say.

Nathan.

Now there he lies! has neither friends, nor money,
To hire friends for himself.

Recha.

Alas, my father!

Nathan.

There without nursing, counsel, or attendance,
He lies, a prey to sufferings and death!

Recha.

Where? where?

Nathan.

He, who for one whom ne'er he knew,
Nor saw—enough for him 'twas human life—
Into the fire did plunge...

Dajah.

Do spare her, Nathan!

Nathan.

Who did not wish to know more, nor to see
The person whom he saved, that he might save
Her giving thanks...

Dajah.

Do, Nathan, spare her!

Nathan.

More,
Not wished to see,—it be then, that he should
Be called upon a second time to save her—
For 'tis enough, 'tis human life...

Dajah.

Hold, look!

Nathan.

He—he, in death, has nought to comfort him,
Except the conscience of this action!

Dajah.

Cease,
You kill her!

Nathan.

And he has been killed by thee!
Thou might'st, this way, have killed him.—Recha!
Recha!
'Tis medicine, not poison, that I give thee.
He lives!—comes to thee!—is, I hope, not sick;
Not even sick!

Recha.

Indeed!—not dead? not sick?

Nathan.

Not dead, indeed!—For God rewards good actions,
Done here below, still here below.—Go!—But
Conceiv'st thou how much easier *pious rapture*
Is than *good action?* how the frailest man
Is prone to cling to pious rapture, only—
Though unaware, at times, of the intention—
Only to save the toil of acting well?

Recha.

Oh do, my father, never leave your Recha
Again alone!—Do you not think, he might
Have only gone a journey?

Nathan.

Go!—It may be so.—
I see a Mussulman examines there,
With looks inquisitive, my laden camels.
You know him?

Dajah.

Ha! it is your dervise.

Nathan.

Who?

Dajah.

Your dervise, 'tis your chess-companion.

Nathan.

What?
Al-Hafi? that Al-Hafi?

Dajah.

Treasurer
Now to the Sultan.

Nathan.

What? Al-Hafi? Dream'st thou
Again?—'Tis he!—indeed, 'tis he;—he's coming;
Be quick, go in!—What am I now to hear?

SCENE III.

NATHAN *and the* DERVISE.

Dervise.

Just tear your eyes wide open, as you may!

Nathan.

Is it thyself? or not?—In such a splendour,
A dervise!...

Dervise.

Well? and why not? Pray, can nothing,
Nothing at all be made out of a dervise?

Nathan.

Aye sure, enough!—But I imagined always,
The dervise—say, the thorough dervise—would
Have nothing made out of him.

Dervise.

By the Prophet!
That I'm no thorough one, may well be true.
Though, if we must—

Nathan.

Must! dervise:—Dervise must?
Nobody needs must, and a dervise must?
And pray what must he?

Dervise.

What he's much besought for,
And what he deems as right, that must a dervise.

Nathan.

By God of ours! there thou speak'st true.—Come, let me
Embrace thee, man.—I hope thou art my friend still?

Dervise.

Ask you not, first, what has been made of me?

Nathan.

Spite of what thou wast made!

Dervise.

What, if I did
Grow such a creature in the State, whose friendship
Would be to you unwelcome?

Nathan.

If thy heart is
Still dervise-like, I'll venture it. The creature
In State is but thy coat.

Dervise.

Which also wants
Regard.—What think you? Guess!—What would I be
At your own Court?

Nathan.

A dervise; nothing more;
Besides yet, probably—my cook.

Dervise.

Indeed!
Unlearning with you my profession.—Cook!
Not butler, too?—Confess, that Saladin
Does know me better,—treasurer I have
Become with him.

Nathan.

Thou?—with him?

Dervise.

Understand me;

O' the lesser purse: his father manages
The greater still.—I'm treasurer for his household.

Nathan.

Large is his household.

Dervise.

Larger than you think:
For every beggar's reckoned in his household.

Nathan.

Still Saladin is so averse to beggars.

Dervise.

That to destroy them, root and branch, he has
Resolved,—e'en should he in the enterprize
Himself turn beggar.

Nathan.

Bravo! so I meant it.

Dervise.

And he's already one, more than the rest;
His treasury is every day at sunset
Much emptier than empty still. The tide,
Howe'er high flowing in at morning, ebbs
Long ere 'tis noon.

Nathan.

Because it is in part
Swallow'd by channels, which to fill or stop,
Is equally impossible.

Dervise.

You've guess'd it.

Nathan.

I know that.

Dervise.

True, it does no good, if princes
Do play the vultures 'mongst the carcases;
But if they're carcases among the vultures,
That's ten times worse.

Nathan.

Oh do not say so, Dervise!
Oh, do not!

Dervise.

You may well talk, you!—Come on,
What do you give me, and I do resign you
My office?

Nathan.

What brings thee thy office?

Dervise.

Me?
Not much. But you, it might enrich you greatly.
For, if cash is at ebb—as often happens—
You may unlock your sluices, may advance,
And take for interest, all that you please.

Nathan.

And interest for int'rest's interest?

Dervise.

Sure!

Nathan.

Till my capital turns all to int'rest?

Dervise.

That does not tempt you? The last chapter then
Write of our friendship's tale, at once! For truly
I much relied upon you.

Nathan.

Truly? How
Then so? how so, then?

Dervise.

That you would assist me,
To fill my post with credit. That you would
At all times have your purse-strings open for me.
You shake your head?

Nathan.

Let's understand each other.
Two things must be distinguish'd here.—Thou? why
Not thou? Al-Hafi, as a Dervise, is
To all which I command, most welcome. But
Al-Hafi, Defterdar of Saladin,
He—him—

Dervise.

Did I not guess it? Oh, you're still
As kind as keen; as keen as you are wise!—
Have patience! what from Hafi you discern,
Shall soon be severed from him.—There, behold
The robe of honour, Saladin did give me;—
Before 'tis faded, and before 'tis torn
To tatters, such as they become a dervise,
'Twill in Jerusalem hang on the hook,
And I'll be on the Ganges, light and barefoot,
Treading the scorching sand amidst my teachers.

Nathan.

That's much like thee!

Dervise.

And playing chess with them.

Nathan.

Thy sovereign good!

Dervise.

What, do you think, seduced me?
Perhaps to save myself from future begging?
To play the man of opulence with beggars?
To have the might, to change the richest beggar
Into a poor rich man, within a trice?

Nathan.

Well, not just that.

Dervise.

Something far more absurd!
The first time in my life, I did feel flatter'd:
Felt so by Saladin's good-hearted notion—

Nathan.

Which was?

Dervise.

" A beggar only understood,
" How beggars feel; a beggar only knew,
" To give to beggars in a proper way.
" Thy predecessor," said he, " was too cold,
" Too rough. Spoke so unkindly, when he gave;
" Inquired so pressingly first after him,
" Who should receive the boon. Not satisfied
" To learn the want itself, he also wished
" To learn its cause; that he might niggardly
" Appropriate his bounty to that cause.
" Not so Al-Hafi. So unkindly kind

" Will Saladin in Hafi not appear.
" Al-Hafi is not like stopp'd pipes, from which
" The waters, they received pure and in silence,
" Will stream out sullied and in bubbling spurts.
" Al-Hafi thinks, Al-Hafi feels like me!"
Thus sweetly was the fowler's whistle sounding,
Until the quail was in the net.—I fool!
Fooled by a fool!

Nathan.

Forbear, my dervise! gently!

Dervise.

What! that should be no folly?—hundred thousands
Of men to squeeze, grind, tease, torment, and butcher,
And play Philanthropist with some of them?
That should no folly be, to ape the bounty
Of the Most High,—which over wicked man
And just, o'er field and desert, does extend,—
And not to have the never-empty hand
Of the Most High? What? that should be no folly...

Nathan.

Cease! 'tis enough!

Dervise.

Let also my own folly
Be mentioned now by me!—What? it should be
No folly, notwithstanding to discover
The fair side of such follies, for the purpose
Of taking part, because of this fair side,
In such a folly? ha! it should not?

Nathan.

Hafi,
Make haste, go to thy desert back. I fear,
Thou may'st, just while thou livest in men's society,
Unlearn to be a man.

Dervise.

I fear the same.
Farewell!

Nathan.

So hastily?—stay, stay! Al-Hafi,
Dost fear, the desert will escape?—Stay, stay!
I wish he heard me!—Hafi, there! I want thee!—
Away he goes; and I had wish'd, about
Our Templar to inquire of him. He knows
Him probably.

SCENE IV.

DAJAH *bursting in.*—NATHAN.

Dajah.

Oh Nathan! Nathan!

Nathan.

Well?
What news?

Dajah.

He shows himself again! Again
He shows himself!

Nathan.

Who? Dajah, who?

Dajah.

He! he!

Nathan.

He? he? when shows He not himself!—Indeed
Your He is only one.—That should not be!
And were he e'en an angel; no, it should not!

Dajah.

He's walking underneath the palm-trees, up
And down, and gathers dates occasionally.

Nathan.

And eats them?—and as Templar?

Dajah.

Do not tease me!
Her longing eye already did espy him,
Behind the close-entangled palms, and follows
Him fixedly. She sends me, to request you,
Nay, to entreat you, forthwith to accost him.
Oh hasten! from the window she'll make signs,
To show you, whether upwards he proceeds,
Or downwards turns. Oh hasten!

Nathan.

Thus, as I
Alighted from the camel?—Is that decent?—
Thou hasten to him; tell him, I'm returned.
Mark what I say! the worthy man but shunn'd
My house, while I was absent? and will come,
Not unpleased, being now invited by

The father. Go, and tell him, I do ask him,
Most heartily...

Dajah.

In vain! He will not come.
In short: he never visits any Jew.

Nathan.

Then go; at least endeavour to detain him;
Thy eyes at least may watch and follow him.—
Go; I shall follow thee immediately.

SCENE V.

SCENE: *A Place of Palms, under which the* TEMPLAR *is walking up and down. A* FRIAR *follows him at some distance, sideways, as if intending to address him.*

Templar.

That man there does not follow me for pastime!—
Look, how askant he eyes my hands!—Good brother—
Perhaps I should say father; no?

Friar.

No, brother.—
I am lay-brother only, at your service.

Templar.

Well, brother then; would, I myself had something!
By God! by God! I've nothing.—

Friar.

Ne'ertheless,
My warmest thanks. And God grant thousandfold
To you, what you would give so gladly. 'Tis
The will, and not the boon, that makes the giver.
Besides, that I was really not sent after
Your Honour for the sake of alms.

Templar.

Yet sent?

Friar.

Yes: from the Cloister.

Templar.

Where just now I was,
In hope of coming in for pilgrims' fare?

Friar.

All tables were already occupied.
But please your Honour to return.

Templar.

And why so?
'Tis true, no meat I've tasted this long time;
But what of that? The dates are ripe.

Friar.

Your Honour,
Prythee, be cautious with this fruit. It does
No good, if taken in abundance; sours
The humors, causes melancholy blood.

Templar.

What, if it pleased me, being melancholy?—
However, I suppose, not for this warning
You were sent after me?

Friar.

Oh no!—I am
Only commissioned to inquire about you;
To feel your pulse.

Templar.

And this you tell yourself?

Friar.

Why not?

Templar.

(Indeed, a cunning brother!)—Has
The Cloister more such men as you?

Friar.

Can't tell.
I must obey, dear Sir.

Templar.

And therefore you
Obey without much scrup'lous criticizing?

Friar.

Were it obedience else, dear Sir?

Templar.

(Does not
A simple mind always maintain the right?)
I hope you may confide me, who it is,
That wants to know more of myself? That you
Are not the man, I'll swear.

Friar.

Would it behove,
Would it avail me?

Templar.

Whom does it behove then,
And whom avail, to be so curious? Whom?

Friar.

The Patriarch: I must believe.—For he
Has sent me after you.

Templar.

The Patriarch?
Knows he the red cross on the robe of white
No better?

Friar.

Even I do!

Templar.

Well? well, brother?
I am a Templar, and a prisoner!
And if I add: made captive at Tebnin,
That castle, which, just when the truce expired,
We sought to climb, in order to direct
Our march to Sidon next;—and if I add:
I was made prisoner with twenty others,
But am the only one, the Sultan pardoned;
With this, the Patriarch knows all he wants;
More than he wants.

Friar.

But hardly more than he
Already knows.—He also fain would learn,
Why Saladin did pardon just your Honour
Alone?

Templar.

Know I myself? Already with
Bare neck I on my mantle kneel'd, awaiting
The blow; when Saladin with steady eyes

Does fix me, nearer springs to me, and beckons.
They do upraise me; I'm unbound; I am
About to thank him; see his eyes in tears.
He's silent, so am I; he goes, I stay.—
How all this hangs together, may unriddle
The Patriarch himself.

Friar.

He does conclude
From this, that God might have preserv'd you for
Great purposes.

Templar.

Indeed for very great ones!
To save a Jewish girl from death in fire;
To be the guide of curious pilgrims up
To Sinai, and more such things.

Friar.

All comes
In time.—Meanwhile this must not be despised.—
Perhaps the Patriarch already thinks
On some far weightier office for your Honour.

Templar.

Indeed? you think so, brother? Gave perhaps
He any hint to you?

Friar.

Indeed, he did!
I'm first to sound your Honour, whether you
Might really be the man he wants.

Templar.

Well, sound me!
(I'm curious to see him sounding!)—Well?

Friar.

I think the shortest way will be, that I
Disclose, most plainly, what the Patriarch
Wants of your Honour.

Templar.

True!

Friar.

He fain would send
A letter by your hand.

Templar.

By me? I am
No messenger.—This, this you call the office,
Which far more glorious is than rescuing
A Jewess from the fire?

Friar.

It seems! For—says
The Patriarch—that letter is of highest
Importance to all Christendom. To bear
That letter safe to destination—says
The Patriarch—will God, one day, in Heaven,
Remunerate with some most glorious crown.
And—says the Patriarch—such crown deserves
No man more than your Honour does.

Templar.

Than I?

Friar.

You are here free; may look about; you know,
How cities may be stormed, and how defended.
You best know—says the Patriarch—to value
The strength and weakness of the second inner

Defence, which lately Saladin threw up;
And could describe them—says the Patriarch—
Most closely to the warriors of the Lord.

Templar.

Good brother, pray can you inform me, too,
Of what that letter specially contains.

Friar.

Well, that—I do not clearly know myself;
The letter is intended for King Philip.—
The Patriarch—I often have been wond'ring,
How such a Saint, who only calls the Heaven
His home, could condescend to be instructed
So thoroughly in matters of this world.
I think, it is indeed hard task for him.

Templar.

Well? And the Patriarch?

Friar.

Knows with precision,
Knows positively, how, where, with what force,
And from what quarter, Saladin, in case
The war breaks out again, will open his
Campaign.

Templar.

That does he know?

Friar.

Yes, and he wants
To bring it to the knowledge of King Philip;
That he may meditate about it, whether
The danger really be so dreadful as
To force us to renew, at any rate,

With Saladin the truce, your Order broke
So bravely.

Templar.

There's a Patriarch!—I see!
The dear brave man will not employ me as
A common messenger; he wants—a spy.—
Go, tell your Patriarch, good brother, tell him,
As far as you could sound me, I am not
The man for this. I must esteem myself
A captive, and a Templar's only calling,
That is, to fight, and not to play the spy.

Friar.

All this, indeed, I did expect of you!
Nor do I mean to blame your Honour!—Though
The best is still to come.—The Patriarch,
Besides this, has discovered name and site
Of that same citadel on Lebanon,
Wherein those mighty treasures are concealed,
With which the Sultan's prudent father pays
The army, and provides the costs of war.
From time to time goes Saladin, through by-ways,
With only few attendants, to that fortress,—
You guess what follows?

Templar.

Not at all!

Friar.

What could
Be easier, then, than there to seize the person
Of Saladin, and do away with him?
You shudder?—Oh, two pious Maronites

Already offered, hazarding the game;
Would only any gallant man consent
To be their leader.

Templar.

And the Patriarch,
Had likewise then selected me, to be
This gallant man?

Friar.

He thinks King Philip could,
With most convenience, from Ptolemais
Lend his support?

Templar.

To me? to me, good brother?
To me? Did you not hear? not hear just now,
What obligations Saladin has brought
Me under?

Friar.

True, so I did hear.

Templar.

And yet?

Friar.

Sure—thinks the Patriarch—that's mighty well;
But still, God and the Order...

Templar.

Alter nothing!
Do not command me villanies.

Friar.

Indeed not!—
Still—thinks the Patriach—is villany
In people's eyes, not villany with God.

Templar.

To Saladin I owe my life, and I
Should take his own?

Friar.

That—fie!—But Saladin
Still—thinks the Patriarch—is notwithstanding
A foe to Christendom, who never could
Earn any right to be your friend.

Templar.

My friend?
Because I will not act against him as
A scoundrel, an ungrateful scoundrel?

Friar.

True!
Though—thinks the Patriarch—no thanks are due,
Before the eyes of God and men, if not
For our own sakes the favour was conferred.
And, as 'tis rumoured—says the Patriarch—
That Saladin did only pardon you,
Because he, by your features and deportment,
Was touched, as if again he saw his brother...

Templar.

This also knows the Patriarch, and yet?—
Ah, were it certainty! Ah, Saladin!
What? Nature had one feature of my own
Form'd in the likeness of thy brother, and
With nothing in my soul, to answer to it?
Not so deceiv'st thou, Nature! God is not
So inconsistent in his works!—Go, brother!—
Go, do not stir my anger up!—Go! go!

Friar.

I go; and go more cheerful than I came.
Your Honour pardon me. We cloister-folk
Are bound to be obedient to superiors.

SCENE VI.

The TEMPLAR, *and* DAJAH, *who, having watched the* TEMPLAR *for a long while, now approaches him.*

Dajah.

Methinks, the Friar did not leave him in
A merry cue.—Still I must risk my game.

Templar.

That's capital!—I ask, does lie the proverb:
That monk and woman,—that the woman and
The monk are the two clutches of the Devil?
To-day I'm thrown from one into the other.

Dajah.

Whom do I see?—You, noble Knight?—Thank God!
Oh, thousand thanks to God!—Pray, tell me, where
Have you been staying all this time?—I hope,
That you have not been ill?

Templar.

No.

Dajah.

Well then?

Templar.

Yes.

Dajah.

Indeed we were quite anxious, lest something
Did ail you.

Templar.

So?

Dajah.

Pray, you have been abroad?

Templar.

Just so!

Dajah.

Return'd to-day?

Templar.

Since yesterday.

Dajah.

And Recha's father too, arrived to-day.
And now, at last, may Recha hope?

Templar.

For what?

Dajah.

For what so often she entreated you.
Her father, soon, in person will invite you
Most pressingly. He comes from Babylon,
With twenty camels, laden heavily
With all the curious drugs, the stones and stuffs,
Which India, and Syria, and Persia,
And even China do produce, and which
As precious are esteem'd.

Templar.

I am no buyer.

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Dajah.

His nation does respect him as a Prince.
But that the name they've given him, is Nathan
The Wise, and not much more the Rich, was often
My wonderment.

Templar.

Perhaps are rich and wise
The same thing with his tribe.

Dajah.

But above all,
He should be call'd by them the Good. For you
Can really not conceive how good he is.
When learning, what a service you did render
To Recha; in that moment, there was nothing
He would not do, he would not give you!

Templar.

Aye?

Dajah.

Oh, try; come and convince yourself!

Templar.

Of what?
How fast a moment does expire?

Dajah.

Would I
Have tarried with him all this time, if he
Were not so good? Do you perhaps believe,
I do not feel my value as a Christian?
Nor was it o'er my cradle said or sung,
That I, one day, to Palestine would follow
My husband, for the only purpose, there

A Jewish girl to educate? The fact is,
That my dear husband was a noble soldier
In Emperor Frederick's army—

Templar.

Was by birth
A Switzer, who obtained the gracious honour,
To be with his Imperial Majesty
Together drown'd in the same river.—Woman!
How often have you told me this already?
Have you no mind, to cease to persecute me?

Dajah.

My Heaven! Persecute!

Templar.

Yes, persecute.
I firmly am resolved, no more to see you,
Nor hear you! Will not ever and again
Be minded by you of a deed, which I
Have done unthinkingly; and which, if I
Do think of it, seems to myself a riddle.
I wish not to repent it. But remember!
If such a case occurs again: 'twill be
Your fault, if I do not so rashly act;
If first I do enquire—and then let burn,
What's burning.

Dajah.

God forbid!

Templar.

From this day forth,
Do me at least the favour, not to know me.
I beg it from you. And the father also,

Keep at a distance from me. Jew is Jew.
I am a bearish Swabian. The girl's
Image has long since left my soul, if ever
It has been there.

Dajah.

But yours remained in *hers*.

Templar.

But why shall it be there? why there?

Dajah.

Who knows!
Men are not always what they seem to be.

Templar.

But seldom better. (*Turns to go.*)

Dajah.

Stay! why do you hurry?

Templar.

Oh, woman, do not make me hate the palm-trees,
Beneath which otherwise I love to walk. [*Goes.*

Dajah.

Go then, thou German bear! go on!—And yet
I must not lose sight of the animal!
[*She follows him from afar.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

(Scene: *The Sultan's Palace.*)

Saladin *and* Sittah, *playing chess.*

Sittah.

Pray, Saladin, where are thy thoughts? how play'st thou
To-day?

Saladin.

Not well? I thought I did.

Sittah.

For me;
And hardly that. Take back that move.

Saladin.

And why?

Sittah.

The knight becomes exposed.

Saladin.

That's true. Then so!

Sittah.

So, there's a fork.

Saladin.

That's true again.—Then check!

Sittah.

What boots it? I put this before; and thou
Art as thou hast been.

Saladin.

Out of this dilemma,
I see, there's no escaping without loss.
Be it! Well, take the knight.

Sittah.

I will not have him.
I pass him by.

Saladin.

Thou dost not so, to speed me.
'Tis the position, not the knight, thou carest for.

Sittah.

May be.

Saladin.

Beware, thou reckon'st not without
Thy host. Look there! what would'st thou wager, this
Thou didst not think of?

Sittah.

No, indeed! For how
Could I presume to think, that thou art so
Much tired of thy queen?

Saladin.

I of my queen?

Sittah.

Well, well, I see: to-day I am to earn
My thousand Dinars, to a Naserin.

Saladin.

How so?

Sittah.

Fine question that!—Because thou losest
With purpose, and at any rate.—Still I
Do not find my account in it. Because,
Besides that such a game does not yield much
Amusement: did I not win always most
With thee, when losing? When didst afterwards
Thou not present me with the twofold stake,
As consolation for the game I lost?

Saladin.

Look there! whenever then thou lost a game,
Thou didst so with intention, darling sister?

Sittah.

At least, it is well possible, that thy
Great bounty, darling brother, be the cause,
That I did not acquire more skill in playing.

Saladin.

We quit the game. Come to an end!

Sittah.

It does
Remain so? Now then: check! and double check!

Saladin.

Indeed, I did not heed this twofold check,
Which at the same time also does disarm
My queen.

Sittah.

Could this be anyhow averted?
Let's see!

Saladin.

No, no: no matter, take the queen.
I've never been successful with that piece.

Sittah.

But with the piece?

Saladin.

Off, off with it! — I shall
Not miss it. And thus everything is guarded
Again.

Sittah.

How civilly we must behave
To queens, my brother has instructed me
But too well. *(She leaves the queen on the board.)*

Saladin.

Take, or do not take her! I
Shall play without that piece.

Sittah.

Why shall I take her?
Check!—check!

Saladin.

Continue!

Sittah.

Check!—and check!—and check!—

Saladin.

And check-mate!

Sittah.

Not yet; thou canst put the knight
Between; or what else thou may'st choose to do.
It is the same!

Saladin.

Right!—Thou art winner, and
Al-Hafi pays. Let him be called! At once!
Not all wrong, Sittah, hast thou been; my thoughts
Were not all in the game; I have been absent.
And then, who always gives us these plain chess-men,
Which mind of nothing, to which no idea
Is coupled! Did I play then with the Imam?
But what of that? The loser wants excuses:
'Twas not the shapeless chess-men, Sittah, which
Have rendered me the loser: 'tis thy art,
Thy calm quick eye . . .

Sittah.

E'en so thou only want'st
To blunt the prickling thorn of thy defeat.
Well, thou wast absent, and still more than I.

Saladin.

Than thou? what made thee absent?

Sittah.

Surely not
The absence of *thy* mind!—Oh! Saladin,
When shall we play again so frequently?

Saladin.

Therefore so much more eagerly we play!—
Ah! war will recommence, thou think'st?—It may!—
On!—I have not the first unsheath'd the sword;
I would have willingly prolong'd the truce
Anew; had willingly at the same time
Espoused my Sittah to a worthy husband.

And that must Richard's brother be; indeed
He's Richard's brother.

Sittah.

That's thy minionship,
To praise thy Richard!

Saladin.

If our brother Melek
Had Richard's sister then bestow'd on him:
Ha! what a House were that! Ha! 'twere the best
Of all the first, best Houses in the world!—
Thou seest I am not loath to praise myself;
I think myself well worthy of my friends.—
There Men would have originated! Men!

Sittah.

Did I not smile, from first, at that fair dream?
Thou dost not know the Christians, wilt not know them.
Their pride, that is: the Christian; not the Man.
For even what, still coming from their founder,
With human worth, imbibes their superstition,
Is not adored by them, because 'tis human:
No, but because Christ taught, Christ acted so.—
'Tis well for them, that yet so good a man
He was! 'Tis well for them, that they may take
His virtue granted, and on faith!—But what
Of virtue!—Not his Virtue; no, his Name
They wish to spread all o'er the world; his name
Shall stigmatize the names of all good men,

And swallow them. The name, and but the name,—
That's what they cherish.

Saladin.

Thou dost mean: why else
Would they require, that also thou and Melek
Should first acquire the name of Christians, ere
You may love other Christians as your consorts?

Sittah.

Aye, well! As if of Christians only, and
As Christians, that love could be hoped for, which
The Maker did implant in man and woman!

Saladin.

The Christians do believe more idle notions,
So they may also well believe in that!—
And still thou err'st.—The Templars, not the Christians,
They are the cause: and not as Christians, but
As Templars. They alone, they are in fault,
That this affair results in nothing. They
Do utterly refuse to give up Acca,
Which Richard's sister should bring as a dowry
To brother Melek. That they might not risk
The int'rest of the Knight, they play the Monk,
The silly Monk. And that perhaps they might
Succeed in playing some good trick by swiftness,
They scarcely had the patience to await
The issue of the truce.—Go to! Go on so!
Go on so, Sirs!—To me you are most welcome!—
If only all things else fared better.

Sittah.

Well?

What else could trouble thee? What else could put
Thee out of countenance.—

Saladin.

The very thing,

Which always put me out of countenance.
I was on Lebanon; have seen our father.
He still is overcome with cares....

Sittah.

Alas!

Saladin.

He can't make shift! 'tis straitening on all sides;
Wants here and there—

Sittah.

What straitens? what is wanting?

Saladin.

What else, but what I scarcely deign to name?
What, if I have it, seems so superfluous
To me, and yet so needful, if I miss it.—
Where is Al-Hafi, then? Is nobody
Sent out for him?—That fatal wretched money!
'Tis well, thou com'st, Al-Hafi.

SCENE II.

The Dervise AL-HAFI. SALADIN. SITTAH.

Al-Hafi.

I suppose,
The moneys are from Egypt now arrived.
I hope 'tis pretty much.

Saladin.

Hast tidings?

Al-Hafi.

I?
Not I! I did suppose, I should receive
The moneys here.

Saladin.

A thousand dinars pay
To Sittah! (*walking thoughtfully to and fro*).

Al-Hafi.

Pay! instead of: take! That's charming!
That is, instead of something, less than nothing.—
To Sittah?—and again to Sittah? and
As lost?—again lost in a game of chess?—
There still it stands, the game!

Sittah.

I hope, thou dost
Not grudge my fortune?

Al-Hafi (*examining the game*).

Grudging! If—you know!

Sittah (*beckoning him*).

Hush, Hafi! Hush!

Al-Hafi (still considering the game).

First grudge it not yourself!

Sittah.

Al-Hafi, hush!

Al-Hafi (to Sittah).

And were the white men yours?

You gave the check?

Sittah.

'Tis well he did not hear it!

Al-Hafi.

And he is now to move?

Sittah (approaching him).

Do, tell at last,

Tell, that I could receive my gold.

Al-Hafi (still eyeing the game).

Oh, yes;

You shall receive,—as ever you received it.

Sittah.

What? art thou crazy?

Al-Hafi.

Why, the game is not

Decided. Saladin, you have not lost.

Saladin (scarcely listening to it).

Well! well! pay! pay!

Al-Hafi.

Pay! pay! and do you see,

That there's your queen still on the board?

Saladin.

Is cancelled;

Is put out of the game.

Sittah.

Be quick then, tell,
That I need only send and fetch the money.

Al-Hafi (still absorbed in the game).

Of course, as usual.—Even if it be so;
If e'en the queen is useless, still you are
For that not yet check-mated.

Saladin (approaches and dashes the board down).

Yes, I am;
I will be.

Al-Hafi.

So!—Small pains, small gains! As won,
So paid.

Saladin.

What is he muttering there? what is it?

Sittah (from time to time winking to Hafi).

Thou know'st him well. He is unyielding. Will
Be coax'd: may-be he's somewhat envious.

Saladin.

What, not of thee, I hope? Not of my sister?—
What do I hear, Al-Hafi? envious? thou?

Al-Hafi.

May-be! may-be! I'd rather have her head
Than mine, or her heart either.

Sittah.

Ne'ertheless
He has at all times paid me rightly. And
Will also pay to-day. Do let him manage!—
Go, Hafi, go! I shall not fail to send,
And fetch the money.

Al-Hafi.

No; no longer will
I act in such a farce. For by all means
He once must hear it.

Saladin.

Who? and what?

Sittah.

Al-Hafi!
Is this thy promise? Thus thou keep'st the word,
Thou gavest me?

Al-Hafi.

How could I suppose, that it
Would go so far!

Saladin.

Well? shall I hear of something?

Sittah.

Al-Hafi, I request thee: be discreet.

Saladin.

'Tis strange indeed! What can it be, which Sittah
Is suing for, thus solemnly, thus warmly,
From such a stranger, from a Dervise, rather
Than from myself, from me, who is her brother.
Al-Hafi, I command now.—Dervise, speak!

Sittah.

My brother, do not let a trifle touch
Thee nearer, than the thing itself deserves.
Thou knowest that, at chess, I won from thee,
At different times, an equal sum of gold.
And standing not just now in need of money;
And Hafi's chest not having yet, just now,
A great abundance of the gold: so I

Have let the stakes remain there. But fear not!
I'll not present them as a gift to thee,
My brother, nor to Hafi, or the chest.

Al-Hafi.

Aye, were this all! this all!

Sittah.

And more such trifles.
There also did remain untouch'd in chest
What once thou didst allow me. Did remain there
Untouch'd since only a few months.

Al-Hafi.

That is
Not all yet.

Saladin.

Not yet?—Wilt thou speak, at last?

Al-Hafi.

All time, we waited for the gold from Egypt,
She has...

Sittah (to Saladin.)

Why listen to him?

Al-Hafi.

Has not only
Nothing received...

Saladin.

Kind girl!—But also has
Advanced to me. Not so?

Al-Hafi.

Maintained your state
Entirely; and provided by herself
All your expense.

Saladin.

Ha! that looks like my sister!

[*Embracing her.*

Sittah.

Who made me rich enough, for doing so,
But thou, my brother?

Al-Hafi.

And ere long he'll make
Her, too, as beggarly as he's himself.

Saladin.

And am I poor? Is such a brother poor?
When had I more, when less, than at this moment?
A cloak, a horse, a sabre,—and a God!
And yet, Al-Hafi, I could really scold thee.

Sittah.

Do not scold, brother. If I only could
With such success relieve our father's sorrows!

Saladin.

Ah! ah! there thou, at once, again dost check
My joyfulness. To me, to my own self,
There is, there can be nothing wanting. But
To him, and in him, to us all.—Advise me,
What shall I do?—From Egypt, may-be, nothing
Will come this long time. Where the fault does lie,
God knows! I hope that peace there still prevails.
I willingly will limit, spare, reduce;
I'll willingly submit, where only I
Myself am touch'd; where but myself, and none
Besides must suffer. Yet, what can that save?
A horse, a cloak, a sabre, I can't miss;

And to my God I cannot offer less
Than ever. 'Tis enough, that he's content
With little: with my heart. Upon the surplus,
That's in thy chest, I have been very much
Relying.

Al-Hafi.

Surplus?—Tell yourself, if you
Would not have sentenced me to be impaled,
Or throttled at the least, if you had found
Me out in hoarding surplus. Whereas on
Embezzlement, it could be ventured.

Saladin.

Well,
What are we next to do, then? Could'st thou, first
Of all, find no one else to borrow from,
But Sittah?

Sittah.

Had I, brother, borne to be
Deprived of that distinction? I by him?
And still I lay a claim to it. I'm still
Not stripp'd entirely.

Saladin.

Only not entirely!
That wanted still! Make speed, take measures, Hafi!
Take up from whom thou canst! and how thou canst!
Go, borrow, promise! Only, Hafi, do
Not borrow from the people I made rich.
For there to borrow, might seem to ask back.
Apply to the most covetous; they will

Lend me the gladliest. For well they know,
How much their money in my hands will thrive.

Al-Hafi.

I know none such.

Sittah.

Just now it strikes my mind,
Al-Hafi, that I heard the news, about
Thy friend's returning.

Al-Hafi.

Friend's? A friend of mine?
Who should that be?

Sittah.

Thy most commended Jew.

Al-Hafi.

Commended Jew? and most by me?

Sittah.

Whom God—
I still remember the expression, which
Concerning him thou didst employ then—whom
His God had granted both the smallest and
The greatest of all treasures of this world,
So amply.—

Al-Hafi.

Did I say so?—What then did
I mean by it?

Sittah.

The smallest, riches; and
The greatest, wisdom.

Al-Hafi.

How that? of a Jew?
Such words should I have spoken of a Jew?

Sittah.

Sayst thou, that thou spok'st never of thy Nathan
Such words?

Al-Hafi.

Oh so! of him! of Nathan!—He
Came really not into my mind.—Indeed?
Has he indeed at last come home? Aye, truly!
It hence appears, he's not so badly off.—
You're right: him call'd the people once, the Wise!
Also, the Rich.

Sittah.

They call him now the Rich,
Still more than ever. All the town resounds
With news of jewels and of treasures, which
He brings.

Al-Hafi.

Well, if once more he is the Rich,
No doubt he will once more be call'd the Wise.

Sittah.

What, Hafi, if thou wouldst solicit him?

Al-Hafi.

And what of him? sure, not to borrow?—Aye,
You know the man!—He lend?—His very wisdom
Consists in lending to no one.

Sittah.

Thou drew'st
At other times to me a different picture
Of him.

Al-Hafi.

If press'd, he'll lend you merchandize;
But money, money? never money! As
For other things, he is a Jew, as there
Not many are: has intellect; knows life;
Plays well at chess. But still, he does distinguish
Himself above all other Jews, not less
Through wickedness than goodness. On this man,
On him do not rely. True, he gives alms,
And vies perhaps with Saladin in giving:
If not so much, yet all as willingly;
All as unostentatiously. To him
The Jew and Christian, Mussulman and Parsee,
They are all one.

Sittah.

And such a man...

Saladin.

How comes
It then, that I heard never of this man?...

Sittah.

He should not lend to Saladin? not lend
To Saladin, who only wants for others,
Not for himself?

Al-Hafi.

Aye, there peeps out the Jew;
The ordinary Jew!—You may believe me!—
He is so jealous of your giving alms;
So envious! He will have the privilege,
That all the world may say to him alone:
God bless you! He refuses but to lend,

From always having means to give. And as
His Law commandeth to him Mercy, but
Does not command Compliance: therefore renders
Him Mercy the most uncomplying fellow,
That's in the world. 'Tis true, since long time past,
I am not just upon most friendly terms
With Nathan. But do not suspect me, that
I therefore could refuse to do him justice.
He would do anything for you,—but that.
Indeed, not that! And I will lose no time,
To go and knock at other doors...Indeed,
Just now I'm thinking of a certain Moor,
Who's rich and covetous.—I'm going; going.

Sittah.

Why in such hurry, Hafi?

Saladin.

Leave him! leave him!

SCENE III.

SITTAH. SALADIN.

Sittah.

He hastens, as if he would fain escape me!—
What's that?—Was he deceived in him, in truth;
Or—is it only us, he would deceive?

Saladin.

What? that thou askest me? When scarcely I
Do know of whom you spoke?—and when

To-day for the first time, I hear you mention
Your Jew, your Nathan.

Sittah.

Is it possible,
The man remain'd conceal'd from thee, who's said
To have found out the tombs of Solomon
And David; who does know a word, mysterious
And strong, through which he could unseal their lids?
And that from there, from time to time, he does
Bring up the countless opulence, which is
Demonstrative of no inferior source?

Saladin.

If this man did obtain his wealth from graves,
Then surely they were not the graves of David
And Solomon. Fools only lay there buried.

Sittah.

Or may-be, reprobates!—Besides, the source
Of Nathan's riches is far more productive,
More inexhaustible, than such a cave
Of Mammon.

Saladin.

For, I hear, he is a tradesman.

Sittah.

His sumpter-mules trot on all roads, toil through
All deserts; in all harbours lie his ships
At anchor. All this did Al-Hafi tell me
Himself, long time ago; and adding still,
With great delight, how ably, nobly, this
His friend bestow'd, what he deem'd not too trifling,
For gaining it by eagerness and prudence;

Still adding: how so free from prejudice
His mind; his heart so open to all virtues,
So harmonizing with all noble feelings.

Saladin.

And still spoke Hafi now so doubtful of him,
So coldly.

Sittah.

Not just coldly; but embarrassed:
As if he thought it dangerous to praise him.
And would not blame him still, without a cause—
Or, should it really be the case, than e'en
The best among that tribe could not escape
His tribe's peculiar tinge? And that in fact
Al-Hafi had to blush for this default
Of his friend Nathan?—Be it, as it may!—
That Jew be more or less than other Jews:
If he is rich; that is enough for us.

Saladin.

But sister, I do hope, thou wilt not take
His property by force?

Sittah.

And pray, what is it,
Which thou call'st force? By fire and sword? No, no;
What force is necessary with the weak,
But their own weakness?—Well, come with me now
Into my Harem, there to hear a Songstress,
Which I did buy but yesterday. Meanwhile
Perhaps is ripening a project, which
I am designing on this Nathan.—Come!

SCENE IV.

SCENE: *before the House of Nathan, where it borders upon the Palms.* RECHA *and* NATHAN *coming out of the house.* DAJAH *joining them afterwards.*

Recha.

You have been very slow, my father. He
Will hardly any more be found.

Nathan.

Well, well;
Although no more here underneath the palm-trees,
Yet elsewhere. Pray, be now composed. Look there!
Is Dajah not approaching us?

Recha.

I'm sure
That she lost sight of him.

Nathan.

I'd rather think
She has not.

Recha.

Else her steps would be more hasty.

Nathan.

May-be that she has not yet seen us...

Recha.

Now
She sees us.

Nathan.

And her speed redoubles. Look!
But pray, be calm! be calm!

Recha.

And would you have
Such daughter, as at present would be calm?
And unconcerned, from whom she did receive
Her life as benefit? Her life, so dear
To her, because to you she owed it first?

Nathan.

I do not wish thee other than thou art;
E'en if I knew, that something very diff'rent
Were stirring in thy soul.

Recha.

What should that be,
My father?

Nathan.

Dost thou ask me? and so bashful?
Whatever in thy inmost heart is passing,—
'Tis innocence and nature. This may give
To thee no trouble. It gives none to me.
But promise me: if once thy heart will speak
More clearly, thou wilt keep from me no wish
It utters.

Recha.

The mere possibility
Of rather veiling you my heart, is frightful!

Nathan.

So we can drop this matter. This is settled,
As once for all.—And there is Dajah.—Well?

Dajah.

He still is walking 'neath the palm-trees, and
Will soon come round yon wall.—Look, there he's coming!

Recha.

Ah! and he seems irresolute, where next?
If to go on? on downwards? right? or left?

Dajah.

No, no. He surely will reiterate
His walk around the Cloister; and pass by us.
What will you lay?

Recha.

Right! right! thou hast already
Addressed him? how seems he to-day?

Dajah.

As usual.
Do hasten hence, that he may not perceive you.

Nathan.

Step farther back, or rather go into
The house.

Recha.

Just one glance more! Alas! the hedge,
That steals him from me!

Dajah.

Come! the father speaks
Most true. You risk, that he, when seeing you,
Turns instantly around.

Recha.

Alas! the hedge!

Nathan.

And if he suddenly emerges from it,
He cannot help perceiving you. Therefore
I ask you, hence!

Dajah.

Come! come! I know a window,
Whence we may have a view of them.

Recha.

Indeed?

[*Both go in.*

SCENE V.

NATHAN, *and shortly afterwards, the* TEMPLAR.

Nathan.

I'm almost shy of this queer fellow. Almost
Perplex'd by his rough virtue. It is strange,
That one man should be fit, to make another
Feel thus embarrassed!—Ha! he comes.—By God!
A youth, much like a man! I love to see
That pleasant, daring look! that sturdy gait!
May-be the shell is bitter, but the kernel,
Sure, is not so.—Where did I see some such?—
Forgive me, noble Frank...

Templar.

What?

Nathan.

Do permit...

Templar.

But what, Jew? what?

Nathan.

That I'm so bold, and do
Address you.

Templar.

Can I help it? But be brief!

Nathan.

Stay; do not hasten so disdainfully,
So proudly, by a man, whom you have made
To be obliged to you for evermore.

Templar.

How that? I think I guess. No? Are you not...

Nathan.

My name is Nathan; and I am the father
Of her, whom your high spirit saved from fire;
And now I come...

Templar.

If thanking:—save the trouble!
I have already suffer'd far too much
From thanks for such a trifle. You, moreover,
Are not obliged to me at all. For pray,
Did I then know the girl to be your daughter?
It is a Templar's duty, that he rushes
To anyone's assistance, whom he sees
In danger. And besides, just then, my life
Was to me all a burden. Willingly,
Most willingly, I seized on the occasion,
Of hazarding it for another life;
Aye, for another—though it only were
That of a Jewess.

Nathan.

Most magnanimous!
Magnanimous and horrid! Yet this turn
Might be expected. Modest greatness loves
To screen itself behind a horrid mask

To scare off admiration. But although
It does disdain the admiration's tribute:
What other tribute is there, it does less
Disdain? Knight, if you were no stranger here,
If you were not a captive, I would not
Thus boldly ask you. Speak, command, in what
Can we be at your service?

Templar.

You? In nothing.

Nathan.

I'm a rich man.

Templar.

To me the richer Jew
Did never seem the better Jew.

Nathan.

And why
Should you not use the better part, which he
Has notwithstanding?—why not use his wealth?

Templar.

Well then, this I will not forswear entirely;
I will not, for my mantle's sake. As soon
As it is altogether threadbare, when
No stitch nor tatter longer holds; then I
Will come and borrow from you cloth or money,
To make a new one.—Do not frown at once!
There is no danger yet; 'tis not so far
Yet with it. As you see, 'tis still in rather
A good condition. Only yonder corner
Displays an ugly spot, for it is singed;

And so it did become, when through the fire
I bore your daughter.

Nathan (*taking hold of the corner and examining it*).

Singular indeed,
That such an ugly spot, that such a brand
Bears better testimony to the man,
Than his own mouth. I feel, that I could kiss—
That spot!—Forgive me!—'Twas not with intention.

Templar.

Pray, what?

Nathan.

A tear dropp'd down on it.

Templar.

No harm!
You'll find more drops on it.—(This Jew begins
To put me almost out of countenance.)

Nathan.

Would you be kind enough, and likewise send
Your mantle to my girl?

Templar.

And to what purpose?

Nathan.

That also she may press her lips upon
That spot. For vainly she does wish, it seems,
To clasp her arms around your knees.

Templar.

But, Jew—
Your name is Nathan?—Nathan—I must tell you—
You range your words—most skilfully—most biting—
I am confused—In fact—I ought to have...

Nathan.

Affect, disguise, much as you please. E'en there
I find you out. You were too good, too honest,
For being more polite.—The girl all feeling;
The female messenger all readiness
To serve you: and the father far abroad—
You took care to preserve her reputation;
You fled her charms; fled, to avoid a conquest.
Also for that I give you thanks—

Templar.

I must
Confess, you know how Templars ought to think.

Nathan.

And only Templars? only *ought?* and only
Because the statutes of the Order rule it?
I know, how good men think; I know that all
The quarters of the world produce good men.

Templar.

But there's a diff'rence, I should say.

Nathan.

Indeed;
A diff'rence, as regards dress, shape, and colour.

Templar.

Also in these, here more or less, than there

Nathan.

About this difference cannot much be said.
The great man everywhere needs much of room;
Too many, set too close together, only
Crush one another's branches. Middling good
As we are, true, grows anywhere in plenty.

But none of us must find fault with the other;
The knotty stump must bear the gnarled block;
The little upper branch must not pretend,
Itself alone had not sprung from the ground.

Templar.

Well said!—But tell me, do you know the Nation,
Which, first of all, did constantly find fault
With fellow-men? Is, Nathan, known to you
The Nation, which first called itself the Chosen?
How then, if I were—not to hate that People—
But yet induced to scorn it for its pride;
That pride which it entailed upon the Christians
And Mussulmen; as if its God alone
Were the true God. You're startled, hearing me,
A Christian and a Templar, speak such words?
Speak,—when and where did that religious rage,
To own the better God, and to obtrude
This better on the whole world as the best,
Display itself in all its blackness, more
Than it does here and now? He, from whose eyes
Not here and now the scales are falling...But
Be blind, who will!—Forget what I have said,
And leave me! (*Turns to go.*)

Nathan.

Ha! you do not know how much
More closely I henceforth will stick to you.—
Oh come, we must, we must be friends.—Despise
My Nation as much as you please. Both of us,
We did not choose our Nations for ourselves.
Are we our Nations? And what means a Nation?

Are Jews and Christians sooner Jews and Christians,
Than they are men? Ah! had I found in you
One more, who is content to call himself
A Man!

Templar.

Yes, yes, by God, you found one, Nathan!
You found one! Here, your hand!—I blush, that I
Could have mistaken you a single instant.

Nathan.

And I am proud of it. But vulgar things
Are they, which rarely are mistaken.

Templar.

And
Rare things we hardly e'er forget.—Yes, Nathan,
We must, indeed, we must be friends.

Nathan.

We are
Already such.—How glad will be my Recha!—
And oh! what a delightful prospect does
Disclose itself before my looks!—First know her!

Templar.

I'm burning with desire.—Who rushes there
Out of your house-door? Is it not her Dajah?

Nathan.

Yes. And so frightened?

Templar.

Let me hope, no evil
Has touch'd our Recha?

SCENE VI.

NATHAN, TEMPLAR, *and* DAJAH *hurriedly.*

Dajah.

Nathan! Nathan!

Nathan.

Well?

Dajah.

Forgive me, noble Knight, if I'm obliged,
To interrupt you.

Nathan.

Well, what is it?

Templar.

What?

Dajah.

The Sultan sent to us. The Sultan wants
To see you. Lord! the Sultan!

Nathan.

Me? the Sultan?
He surely longs to see what novelties
I have brought back. Just make reply, that little
Or nothing of the wares is yet unpacked.

Dajah.

No, no; he will see nothing; he will speak
To you, in person; as soon as you can.

Nathan.

I shall appear.—And now, pray, go, withdraw!

Dajah.

Pray, do not take it unkind, gallant Knight.—

Lord! we are in such fear, what possibly
The Sultan wants.

Nathan.

That will appear. Withdraw!

SCENE VII.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR.

Templar.

And so you do not know him yet?—I mean
His person.

Nathan.

Saladin's? Not yet? I never
Avoided, never sought to learn to know him.
Public opinion speaks too well of him,
For me not rather to prefer belief
To observation. Yet, now—if it else
Be true—he has through saving of your life...

Templar.

Yes, it is true, indeed. The life I'm living,
I did receive of him as gift.

Nathan.

Through which
He gave to me a double, treble life.
This alters everything between us; this
Flings suddenly a bond around me, which
For ever ties me to his service. Truly,
I scarcely, scarcely can defer enquiring,

For what he will command me first. I'm ready
For anything; I'm ready to confess
To him, that I am so, on your account.

Templar.

As yet, I could not find the means to thank him,
However often I did throw myself
Into his way. Th' impression I made on him,
Came quickly, as again it quickly vanished.
Perhaps he does not even recollect me.
And still he must recall me to his mind,
At least for once, for finally deciding
My fate. 'Tis not enough, that by his order
I still exist, am living by his will;
I am moreover still to learn of him,
According to whose will I am to live.

Nathan.

True! So I shall the more avoid delay.—
Perchance some word may furnish me occasion
To mention you.—And now, permit, excuse—
I'm hastening.—But when, when shall we see you
With us?

Templar.

Whene'er I may.

Nathan.

Whene'er you please.

Templar.

Then still to-day.

Nathan.

And may I crave your name?

Templar.

My name, that was—is Curd of Stauffen.—Curd!

Nathan.

Of Stauffen?—Stauffen?—Stauffen?

Templar.

Pray, what strikes you
So much in that?

Nathan.

Of Stauffen?—Some more of them,
No doubt, already were...

Templar.

Oh yes, here were,
Here rot some more of that same family.
My uncle e'en,—I mean to say, my father—
But why then does your look so sharpen on me,
Now more and more?

Nathan.

Oh nothing! nothing! How
Can I be weary of beholding you?

Templar.

Therefore
I quit you first. Not seldom finds the eye
Of the inquirer more than it desired
To find. I fear it, Nathan. Future time
Not curiosity, be our inquirer! [*Goes.*

Nathan (*looking after him with surprise*).

" Not seldom finds the eye of the inquirer
" More than it did desire to find."—Indeed,
It is, as if he read my soul!—Aye, true.
That too may chance to me.—'Tis not alone

Wolf's walk, Wolf's stature: 'tis his voice too. So,
Just so, did Wolf e'en move his head; did Wolf
E'en bear his sword upon his arm; brush'd Wolf
His eyebrows with his hand, as if he wanted
To screen the flashing lustre of his looks.—
Strange, how such deeply-graven images,
At times will slumber in us, till at last,
A word, a sound awakens them!—Of Stauffen!—
I'll know that soon more accurately; soon.
Now first to Saladin. But what? lies there
Not Dajah waiting?—Well, come nearer, Dajah.

SCENE VIII.

DAJAH. NATHAN.

Nathan.

What is the wager? Both of you have something
More at your heart, than learning what I'm sent for
By Saladin.

Dajah.

And can you blame her for it?
Just when you did commence more confidently
To speak to him, the Sultan's message came,
Which tore us from the window.

Nathan.

Well, go, tell her,
She may expect his visit every instant.

Dajah.

Indeed? Indeed?

Nathan.

And, Dajah, I do hope,
I may rely on thee? Be on thy guard;
I ask thee. Thou shalt not have to repent it.
Thy conscience even shall find its account
In it. Be only mindful, not to cross
My ways, in anything, which I am planning.
Do not relate, nor ask, but with discretion,
And with forbearance...

Dajah.

Is there need to warn me
Of such a thing?—I go; and you go likewise.
For look!—I think a second messenger
Comes from the Sultan; Hafi comes, your dervise.

[*Goes.*

SCENE IX.

NATHAN. AL-HAFI.

Al-Hafi.

Ha! ha! to you just now my steps were bound.

Nathan.

Is it so pressing? Tell me, what he wants
Of me?

Al-Hafi.

Who?

Nathan.

Saladin.—I'm coming, coming.

Al-Hafi.

To whom? To Saladin?

Nathan.

Does Saladin

Not send thee?

Al-Hafi.

Me? No. Has he sent already?

Nathan.

Indeed, he has.

Al-Hafi.

If so, it is all right.

Nathan.

What? what is right?

Al-Hafi.

That...I am not in fault;
God knows, I'm not in fault.—What falsehoods, lies,
Did I not tell of you, to ward it off!

Nathan.

To ward off what? What is all right?

Al-Hafi.

That you
Have now become his Defterdar. I do
Deplore it, but I shall not witness it.
I go, this very hour; I go. You know
Already whither; and you know the road.
And if you have commissions by that way,
Command me. Though, indeed, it must not be

More than a bare-back'd man can carry with him.
Be brief, I'm going.

Nathan.

Hafi, recollect;
Pray recollect, that I'm still ignorant
Of all. What talk'st thou of?

Al-Hafi.

Oh, I dare say,
You'll bring the bags along with you?

Nathan.

The bags?

Al-Hafi.

The money you are to advance the Sultan.

Nathan.

And that is all?

Al-Hafi.

And I perhaps should witness,
How he will scoop and scoop, day after day,
Till you are void and bare from top to toe?
Should witness, how profusion borrows, borrows,
And borrows from the never-empty coffers
Of prudent bounty, till there's nothing left
To keep the poor domestic little mice
From starving? Do you perhaps fancy, he
Who wants your money, would at the same time
Take your advice? Indeed, he is the man
To take advice! When listened Saladin
E'er to advice? Imagine, what just now
With him did happen to me.

Nathan.

Well?

Al-Hafi.

I happen'd
To come to him just after he had finish'd
A game of chess with Sittah. Sittah plays
Not badly; and the game, which Saladin
Consider'd lost, had given up already,
Stood still unalter'd there. I look'd at it,
And found his game to be still very far
From being lost.

Nathan.

A blest discovery for thee!

Al-Hafi.

All that he needed, was to move his king
Close to the pawn, to meet her check.—Would, I
Could show it now to you!

Nathan.

Oh, I do trust thee!

Al-Hafi.

For so the castle gained free field, and she
Were lost. I called to him, that I might show him
All this. But think!

Nathan.

He's not of thy opinion?

Al-Hafi.

He does not even listen; and with scorn
O'erthrows the pieces.

Nathan.

It is possible?

Al-Hafi.

And said, it were his will to be check-mated;
His will! You call that playing?

Nathan.

Hardly so;
'Tis playing with the play.

Al-Hafi.

And yet the stake
Was not a nutshell.

Nathan.

Money here or there,
That is the last concern here; but not even
To listen to thee! not e'en lend an ear
To thee, upon a point of such importance!
Not to admire thy eagle-eye! that, that
Is crying for revenge; dost thou not think so?

Al-Hafi.

Ah, nonsense! I relate you this, by way
Of showing to you, how his brains are form'd.
In short, I can no longer bear with him.
There I've been running to each dirty Moor,
To ask if one of them would lend him money.
I, who went never for myself a-begging,
Shall borrow now for others. Borrowing
Is much the same as begging; just as lending
On usury is much the same as thieving.
Among my Ghebers on the Ganges, there
I'm not obliged to fly to either. There

I need be tool of neither. On the Ganges,
Upon the Ganges only, there are men.
Here, you're the only mortal who does merit
To live upon the Ganges. Will you with me?
Leave in his hands at once all trumpery,
Which he is coveting. For by all means
He'll rid you of it. So, all drudgery
Will end at once. I'll find for you a Dalk.
Come! come!

Nathan.

I do opine, this resolution
Is always open to us. Yet I will
Consider it. Stay, wait, till I...

Al-Hafi.

Consider?
No; such things must not be consider'd.

Nathan.

Stay,
At least, till I'm return'd from Saladin;
Until I bade farewell...

Al-Hafi.

He who considers,
Wants motives for not daring. He who cannot
At once and suddenly resolve to live
For his own self, remains a slave of others
For all his life. Just as you please!—Farewell!
Do as you please. My path lies there; yours there.

Nathan.

Al-Hafi, surely thou wilt first draw up
Thy balance?

Al-Hafi.

Trifles! The amount of cash
Left in my chest, is not worth being counted;
And my account is vouch'd—by you, or Sittah.
Farewell!

Nathan, (looking after him).

I vouch thee!—Savage, honest, noble,—
How shall I call him? Yes, the real beggar
Is, after all, the only real monarch!

[*Goes in another direction.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

(THE SCENE: *in Nathan's house.*)

RECHA *and* DAJAH.

Recha.

What, Dajah, were the words my father used?
"I may expect his visit every instant?"
That sounds—or does it not?—as if he soon
Were to appear.—And yet, how many instants
Have pass'd already!—Ah, well: who would think
Of those which fled away?—I only think
Of living in those instants which are still
To come. For one, at last, must come, that brings him.

Dajah.

Oh, that confounded message from the Sultan!
But for that message, Nathan would, most surely,
Have brought him here at once.

Recha.

And when at last
This instant is arrived. And when at last
The warmest and the inmost of my wishes
Will be fulfill'd: what then?—what then?

Dajah.

What then?

I hope, that then the warmest of *my* wishes
Will also be fulfill'd.

Recha.

Aye, what will then
Fill up the vacant place within my heart,
Which did unlearn already, how to heave,
Without one ruling wish of wishes!—Nothing?
Ah, I'm alarmed!...

Dajah.

Then *my* wish shall supplant
The one that is fulfill'd. I say, *my* wish:
To know thou art in Europe, and to know thee
In such hands as are worthy of thyself.

Recha.

Thou err'st—For just the thing that forms thy wish,
That very thing will e'er prevent me from
Adopting it as mine. Thy country draws
Thee hence: and mine, mine should not fascinate me?
The image of thy kindred, that's not all
Effaced yet from thy soul, should work more strongly,
Than they, whom I can see, caress, and hear;
Than my own kindred?

Dajah.

Struggle as thou may'st!
The ways of Heaven are the ways of Heaven.
And what, if thy Preserver were the man,
Through whom his God, for whom he fights, intended
To lead thee to the country, to the people,
Which thou art born for?

Recha.

Dajah! my dear Dajah!
What queer things art thou talking there again!
Indeed, thou art possess'd of certain strange
Ideas! "His, his God! for whom he fights!"
Pray, whose monopoly is God? what God
Is that, who's man's monopoly? who wants
A champion?—And pray, how can we learn
For which earth-clod we're born, unless it is
For that, *upon* which we are born?—What, if
My father heard thee speak such things!—What harm
Did he to thee, to make thee always picture
My happiness at farthest distance from him?
What harm did he to thee, to make thee strive,
To plant the weeds, the flowers of thy country,
Among the seeds of reason, which so pure
He sow'd into my soul? My dearest, dearest Dajah,
Thou seest he will not have thy colour'd flowers
Upon my soil!—And I, too, must acknowledge,
That I myself do feel my soil so sterile
And so exhausted by thy flowers, in spite
Of their adorning it so charmingly.
Their sour-sweet odour makes me feel so giddy,
So stupified!—Indeed thy own brains are
More used to it. I therefore do not blame
Those stronger nerves, which can support it. But
To me it proves not wholesome. And indeed,
Thy Angel! speak, did he not well nigh make
A fool of me? —I'm still ashamed before
My father of the farce!

Dajah.

Farce!—As if wisdom
Were only here at home! Indeed, a farce!
Would, I had liberty to speak!

Recha.

Thou hast not?
Have I not been all ear, whenever thou
Didst choose to speak to me about the Heroes
Of thy Religion? Did I not bestow
My admiration freely on their deeds,
My tears upon their sufferings? 'Tis true,
'Twas not their Faith that seem'd to me their most
Heroic side. Yet so much more consoling,
I found the doctrine, that fidelity
To God does not at all depend upon
Our notions about God.—This, my dear Dajah,
My father did express so often; thou
Thyself so often didst agree with him
Upon this point;—and why now undermine
What thou hast been erecting in accord
With him?—Dear Dajah, this discourse is not
The fittest for us, to await our friend with.
True, to myself, it is! For 'tis to me
Of infinite importance, if he also...
Hark, Dajah!—Are not steps there at the door?
If it were he! Hark!

SCENE II.

RECHA, DAJAH, *and the* TEMPLAR,

(*to whom somebody from the outside opens the door, saying:—*)

Step into this room!

Recha (*starts, but composes herself, and offers to fall at his feet*).

'Tis he! My saviour, ah!

Templar.

This to avoid,
I meant, when I deferr'd my call: and yet—

Recha.

Aye, let me, at the feet of this proud man,
But once again thank God, and not the man.
The man does claim no thanks; no more than does
The water-bucket, which did show itself
So busy in extinguishing the flames.
Which suffer'd with indifference to be fill'd,
And to be emptied: so the man. He also
Was thrust, he knew not how, into the fire;
Where, just by chance, I dropp'd into his arms;
And, just by chance, I did remain within
His arms, like sparks upon his mantle; till
Again, by what I do not know, we both
Were found ejected from the fire.—What cause
Is there for thanks? In Europe does the wine
Urge people to still greater actions.—Templars
Are prompted, always thus to act. Are prompted,

Like hounds of some superior training, out
Of fire to fetch, as well as out of water.

Templar (*who all the time has been looking at her with surprise and uneasiness*).

Oh Dajah, Dajah! if sometimes, in moments
Of grief and choler, my splenetic temper
Betray'd me to rebuke thee; why convey
To her each folly that escaped my tongue?
That, Dajah, was too piercing a revenge!
I hope, henceforth, thou wilt interpret me
To her more favourably.

Dajah.

Knight, I think not,
I do not think, those trifling barbèd words,
Which have been hurl'd upon her heart, have there
Disserved you much.

Recha.

How, you had grief? and were
More parsimonious with your grief, than you
Were with your life?

Templar.

Kindhearted, charming child!—
How is my soul divided between eye
And ear!—Not this one was the self-same maiden,
No, no, that was not she, whom from the fire
I rescued.—For, who had known *her*, and had
Not rescued her from fire? Aye, who had left
That task to me?—True—horror—does disfigure—
(*Pause: during which he gazes at her, as if entranced.*)

Recha.

But to myself you still appear the same.
(*Another pause, after which she interrupts his amazement, continuing:*)
Well, Knight, now tell us, where you all this time
Have been?—It seems to me, as might I ask,
Where you are now?

Templar.

I am—where I perhaps
Ought not to be.—

Recha.

Where you have been? And also,
Where you perhaps ought not to have been? That's
Not well.

Templar.

Up—up—what is the mountain's name?
Up Sinai.

Recha.

Up Sinai?—That's charming!
For now, at last, I shall with certainty
Learn whether it be true...

Templar.

What? what? if it
Be true, that there the spot may yet be seen,
Where Moses stood before God, when...

Recha.

Not that.
Because, where'er he stood, 'twas before God.
Of this I know enough already.—But
I wish'd to learn from you, if it be true,

That—that it is by far less troublesome,
To climb that mountain, than 'tis to descend it?—
For look, with all the mountains, which I ever
Ascended, it was just the contrary.
Well, Knight?—You turn your face off? What?—
You will
Not look at me?

Templar.

Because I wish to hear you.

Recha.

Because you do not wish me to perceive,
You smile at my simplicity; you smile
At my not finding anything of more
Importance with that holiest of all mountains,
To ask you? Do you not?

Templar.

I see, I must,
Must really look again into your eyes!—
What? Now you cast them down? Now it is you,
Who does suppress a smile? Because I yet
Desire to read in doubtful features, what
I hear so plainly, what so audibly
You tell me—or conceal from me?—Oh, Recha!
How truly did he say to me: "First know her!"

Recha.

Who told you?—and of whom?—who told you so?

Templar.

"First know her!" so your father said to me;
Said so of you.

Dajah.

And said I not the same?
Did I not say the same?

Templar.

But, pray, where is he?
Where does your father tarry? Is he still
With Saladin?

Recha.

No doubt.

Templar.

What? still, still there?—
Oh, I oblivious man! No, no; he is
Now hardly there.—I'm positive, he is
Awaiting me, below there, at the Cloister.
I think that so we did agree. Permit me!
I go, I'll fetch him...

Dajah.

That is my concern.
Stay, Knight, delay. I'll bring him instantly.

Templar.

Oh no; oh no! He looks for me, not you.
Besides, that he might easily...who knows?
While with the Sultan, he might easily...
You do not know the Sultan!...easily
Get into harm.—Believe me, there is danger,
If I do not go.

Recha.

Danger? and what danger?

Templar.

Danger for me, for you, for him; unless
I quickly, quickly go. [*Goes.*

SCENE III.

RECHA *and* DAJAH.

Recha.

What means that, Dajah?
So quickly?—What befalls him? What does strike him?
What drives him hence?

Dajah.

Let things go on. I think,
'Tis not an evil sign.

Recha.

Sign? and of what?

Dajah.

That something passes in him. It is boiling,
But it must not boil over. Leave him; leave him.
'Tis now your turn.

Recha.

With what? Thou, like himself,
Becomest to me incomprehensible.

Dajah.

Now, soon, you may give back to him that same
Uneasiness, which he occasion'd you.
But be not too vindictive, too severe.

Recha.

Thou know'st alone, what thou art talking of.

Dajah.

And are you really then so calm again?

Recha.

I am; indeed, I am...

Dajah.

At least confess,
That his uneasiness does cause you pleasure;
And that to his uneasiness you owe
What now of ease you do enjoy.

Recha.

Indeed,
Of all this I am perfectly unconscious.
For what, at most, I could confess, that is,
That I myself cannot help wondering,
How possibly such uproar in my heart
Could be succeeded by such sudden calm.
His perfect aspect, speech, and carriage, have...

Dajah.

Already satiated you?

Recha.

Oh no;
I'll not say satiated;—far from it.—

Dajah.

Have only quench'd the strong desire.

Recha.

Aye, well;
If thou wilt have it so.

Dajah.

I? no.

Recha.

For ever,
He will be dear to me; remain to me
Much dearer than my life; although my pulse
Will no more change, if his mere name is mention'd;
Altho' my heart will not throb faster, stronger,
Whene'er I think of him. What am I prating?
Come, come, dear Dajah, once more to the window,
Which looks upon the palms.

Dajah.

And so the strong
Desire is not entirely quench'd as yet?

Recha.

And now once more I am to see the Palms,—
Not Him alone beneath the palms.

Dajah.

This coolness,
I think, begins another paroxysm.

Recha.

What coolness? I'm not cool. Indeed I see
Not with less pleasure, what I see with calmness.

SCENE IV.

(SCENE: *An Audience-room in the Palace of the Sultan.*)

SALADIN *and* SITTAH.

Saladin (*while entering, giving directions at the door*).
Here introduce the Jew, whene'er he comes.
He does not seem to be in too great haste.

Sittah.

May-be he was not just at hand; or is
Not found yet.

Saladin.

Sister! sister!

Sittah.

Thou appear'st
As if a battle were impending.

Saladin.

And
With weapons which I never learn'd to wield.
I shall disguise myself, raise apprehensions,
Lay snares, shall tempt upon a slippery ground.
When had I used such tricks? Where had I learn'd
To use them? And all that, alas, for what?
For what? To fish for money; yes, for money!—
Aye, for extorting money from a Jew!
To such base artifices I'm at last
To fly, that I might furnish the most trifling
Of trifles?

Sittah.

Brother, trifling things, too much
Despised, find methods of revenge.

Saladin.

Too true!—
And what, if this Jew proves to be the good,
The reasonable man, whom once the Dervise
Described to thee?

Sittah.

Oh, then the case is diff'rent!
Then there's no difficulty! For the snare
Does threaten but the covetous, the cautious,
The fearful Jew; and not the good man, not
The wise man. For he is already ours,
Without a snare. The pleasure of perceiving,
How, with bold strength, he either tears abruptly
The snares to pieces; or else, how with cunning
Discretion he does wind himself beyond
The nets; this pleasure will be all to boot.

Saladin.

That, certainly, is true. I do indeed
Anticipate that pleasure.

Sittah.

In that case
There's nothing to embarrass thee. For if
He is but one out of the many; if
He's but a Jew like other Jews; I hope,
To such thou wilt not blush to seem a man,
As he imagines all the other men.
Moreover, he thinks him a dupe, a fool,
Who treats him better.

Saladin.

This implies: I must
Act badly, lest bad men should pass on me
Bad judgment?

Sittah.

Ay! if thou call'st acting badly,
To use each thing in its peculiar way.

Saladin.

Did ever woman's wit invent a thing
It could not palliate!

Sittah.

Not palliate!

Saladin.

I fear this tender fine-wrought fancy-work
Will break in my rude hand!—Affairs like this
Must be accomplish'd, as they are invented;
With utmost cunning and dexterity.—
Well, be it then! I'll make one in the dance;
Although I wish—I were a worse adept,
Not a superior one.

Sittah.

But do not trust
Thyself too little! I will answer for thee!
But show a will!—We know, men like thyself
Would willingly persuade us, that their swords,
Their swords alone, had made them what they are.
Indeed, the lion, hunting with the fox,
Feels shameful—of the fox, not of the cunning.

Saladin.

And we do know, how willingly ye women
Would level men down to yourselves.—Now, leave me!—
I think I know my lesson now by heart.

Sittah.

What? must I go?

Saladin.

Thou didst not think of staying?

Sittah.

If not to stay...not just within your sight—
But in the next room yonder—

Saladin.

There to listen?
Not e'en that, sister, if I'm to succeed.
Hence, hence! the curtain rustles; he is coming!
Beware of staying! I'll be on the watch.

[*While she is retiring through one door, Nathan enters through another; and Saladin has seated himself.*

SCENE V.

SALADIN *and* NATHAN.

Saladin.

Approach, Jew!—Nearer!—Step up close to me!
No fear!

Nathan.

Fear be the portion of thy enemies!

Saladin.

Thy name is Nathan?

Nathan.

Yes.

Saladin.

Surnamed The Wise?

Nathan.

No.

Saladin.

Well! not thou, the People calls thee so!

Nathan.

May-be; the People!

Saladin.

Pray, thou dost not think,
I meet contemptuously the People's voice?—
Long have I wish'd to learn to know the man,
Whom People call the Wise.

Nathan.

But how, if they
But call'd him so, to mock him? If with them,
Wisdom meant only Prudence? Prudent were
But he who understood his interest?

Saladin.

I hope, thou mean'st, his real interest?

Nathan.

If so, of course, most selfish men would be
Most prudent. Prudence then and Wisdom were
The same.

Saladin.

I see, thou dost confirm, what thou

Want'st to refute. Men's real interests,
Which people do not know, are known to thee.
At least, thou didst attempt to learn to know them.
Thou hast reflected on it. This e'en makes
The wise man.

Nathan.

Such thinks every man himself!

Saladin.

And now there is enough of modesty!
For if we meet with it incessantly,
Where we expect plain sense, that is disgusting.

(*He rises hastily.*)

Well, let's come to the question now! But,—but,
With candour, Jew, I say with candour!

Nathan.

Sultan,
I'll serve thee, rest secure, so as to render
Myself well worthy of thy further custom.

Saladin.

What? serving me?

Nathan.

Thou shalt have all best things
Of my whole stock. And thou shalt have them at
The lowest rate.

Saladin.

What talk'st thou of? I hope
Not of thy goods?—Concerning chaffering,
My sister will attend. (Take that, eaves-dropper!)—
'Tis not the merchant, with whom I've to deal.

Nathan.

If so, beyond all doubt, thou want'st to know,
What I, while on my travelling-route, might have
Perceived or witness'd of thy enemies,
Who really stir again?—Shall I with candour...

Saladin.

'Tis even not this course which I have steer'd
With thee. I know enough of that; as much
As I do want.—In short:—

Nathan.

Command me, Sultan.

Saladin.

What I desire of thee, is thy instruction
In something different; much different.—
Now, as thou art so wise; prythee, just tell me—
Which is the Creed, which are the Tenets, that
More than the rest convinced thy reason?

Nathan.

Sultan,
I am a Jew.

Saladin.

And I'm a Mussulman.
The Christian stands between us.—Of these three
Religions only one, indeed, can be
The best. A man like thee will never stick
To that spot, whither accident of birth
Has thrown him. Or else, if he sticks, 'tis for
Persuasion, reasons, preference of the better.
Well, give me knowledge then of thy persuasion.
Explain to me those reasons, over which

To pore myself, I never was at leisure.—
Inform me,—all in confidence, of course—
Of that choice, which resulted from those reasons ;
That I may make that choice my own choice.—How ?
Thou start'st ? thou weigh'st me with thy eye ?—
May-be,
That I'm the first of Sultans whose head such
A whim did ever enter, which methinks
Is after all not so unworthy of
A Sultan.—Is it not ?—Give thy opinion !
Speak !—Or dost thou require a moment's time
For meditation ? Well, I grant it to thee.—
(I wonder, does she hearken ? I'll surprise her;
Learn, whether well I play'd my part.—) Reflect !
Be quick, reflect ! 'Twill not be long before
I do return.

[*He enters the next apartment, into which Sittah repaired.*

SCENE VI.

NATHAN, *alone.*

Hem ! hem !—strange !—What shall I
Call this ?—What will the Sultan ?—what ?— I am
Prepared for Cash ; and he will—Truth. Aye, Truth !
Will have it so—so ready, smooth,—as if
The truth were coinage !—Aye, were it at least

Most antique coinage, which they used to weigh!—
That might still pass! But modern coinage, which
Is valued by its stamp, which only needs
To be paid down, well—truth is no such thing!
Can truth be shoved into the head, as money
Into the pocket? Who then is the Jew here?
Myself or he? But how? should he perhaps
Not ask for truth in truth? Indeed,—indeed,
Suspecting him, that he might use the truth
Only as snare,—that truly were too little!
Too little?—What then is too little for
A great man? Surely, he was down on me
So suddenly! The way is, first to knock
And hear, when ye approach as friend.—I must
Be on my guard!—But how that?—To appear
The thorough Jew, that is not well becoming;
And not at all the Jew, still less becomes.
For if not Jew, he only needs to ask,
Why not a Mussulman?—That was it! That
May save me!—'Tis not only children, whom
We satisfy with tales.—He comes. Come on!

SCENE VII.

SALADIN *and* NATHAN.

Saladin.

(So now the field is clear!)—I hope I do not
Return too soon for thee. Thou hast now done

With thy consideration.—Now then, speak!
No soul does hear us!

Nathan.

Would, that all the world
Might hear us!

Saladin.

So secure is Nathan on
His subject? Ha! that is what I do call
A wise man! Never to conceal the truth!
To put at stake for it his everything;
His body, life, his property and blood!

Nathan.

Yes! yes! if needful and if useful.

Saladin.

I
Dare hope henceforth, that one of all my titles,
"Reformer of the world and of the law,"
I shall deserve.

Nathan.

Indeed a glorious title!
But, Sultan, ere I fully do confide thee,
Wilt thou permit me to relate to thee
A little tale?

Saladin.

Why should I not? I was
At all times fond of little tales, if well
Narrated.

Nathan.

Aye, to narrate *well*, just that,
I must observe, is not my part.

Saladin.

Again
So proudly modest ?—Quickly ! narrate ! narrate !

Nathan.

In days of yore a man lived in the East,
Who had a ring of worth inestimable,
Presented to him by dear hands. The stone,
An Opal, beam'd in hundred colours fair,
And had the hidden craft, to make beloved,
By God and men, him who was wearing it
With confidence to this effect. What marvel,
But our man in the East would from his finger
It ne'er let part, and that he made provision,
To make it with his family remain
For ever ? In this way. He did bequeath
The ring to that son, whom he dearest loved ;
And made the rule, that this son, in his turn
Bequeath the ring to that son of his own,
Whom best he loved. And ever the best loved,
Birth not regarded, by the ring's mere virtue,
Should be the head, chief of the family.
Dost understand me, Sultan ?

Saladin.

Aye. Continue !

Nathan.

This way, the ring, pass'd down from son to son,
At last came to a father of three sons,
All three of whom were equally obedient ;
Upon all three he therefore could not help
Bestowing equal love. From time to time,

Still seem'd to him, now this one, now the other,
And now the third,—accordingly as each
Was left alone with him, not sharing with
The other two his overflowing heart,—
More worthy of the ring, which he then had
The pious weakness, each of them to promise.
This pass'd as long as pass it could; but then
The time of death approach'd, and the good father
Is in embarrassment. It grieves him, two
Dear sons, who do rely upon his word,
Thus much to aggravate. What should he do?
He sends in secret for an artist, whom
He orders, after model of his ring,
To make two others, not to spare expense,
Nor pains, to make them perfectly resemble
His own ring. And successful is the artist;
So that, when he receives the rings, the father
Himself is never able to distinguish
His model ring. Most joyful and most cheerful,
He calls his sons, each in particular;
Gives to each in particular his blessing—
Also his ring,—and dies.—Thou hear'st me, Sultan?

Saladin (who has turned away in perplexity).

I hear, I hear!—bring quickly to an end
Thy little tale.—Thou wilt?

Nathan.

I have just finish'd;
For what ensues is only what's of course.
Scarcely is the father dead, when each
Comes with his ring, and each pretends to be

Chief of the family. They do inquire,
They quarrel, sue. In vain. The right ring was
Not proveable;
(*After a pause, during which he is waiting for the* SULTAN'S *answer*);—
Was as unproveable
Almost, as now to us—the true Religion.

Saladin.

What! this shall be the answer to my question?

Nathan.

Shall but excuse me, if I do not venture
Here to discern the rings, which by the father
Were ordered to be made, with the intention,
That they might never be distinguishable.

Saladin.

The rings!—Beware of trifling with me!—I
Should think that those religions which I named,
Might yet be well discernible. So far
As even clothing, food, and beverage!

Nathan.

And only not so far as to their grounds.
For do they all not ground on history?
That's written or traditional?—And is
Not history the only thing which must
Be taken on good faith?—Or is it not so?
Well, whose good faith then is it, which the least
We doubt? Is it not that of our own people?
Not theirs, whose blood we are? not theirs, who from
Our infancy did prove to us their love?
Who ne'er deceived us, only, where to be

Deceived, was the more wholesome thing to us?
How can I give less credit to my fathers,
Than thou givest thine? Or on the contrary;
Can I demand of thee, to give the lie
To ancestors of thine, in order not
To gainsay mine? Or on the contrary;
The same thing may be said of Christians. Not?

Saladin.

(By Him who is alive! the man is right.
I must be quiet).

Nathan.

Let's revert to our
Three rings. The sons, as mention'd, sued each other
By law, and each was sworn before the Judge;
Having the ring got from his father's hand
Immediately.—As was the fact!—When having
Already long ago obtain'd his promise,
To have the use of the ring's privilege
In future;—as was still the fact!—The father,
Each did protest, could not have been imposing
On him, the son; and rather than allow
Him, such a loving father, of such thing
To be suspected: rather must he suffer
His brothers, of whom otherwise the best
He gladly would believe, to be accused
Of foul play, and he would have means to find
The traitors out, and to avenge himself.

Saladin.

And now the Judge?—I do desire to hear,
What words thou mak'st the Judge to say. Speak out!

Nathan.

The Judge spoke: If ye do not bring the father
Before me, soon, I shall send ye away
From this my seat. Think ye, I do sit here
To solve enigmas? or are ye in waiting,
Until the genuine ring speaks for itself?—
But hold! I hear, the right ring does possess
The magic craft, to make beloved and dear,
Both unto God, and unto men. That must
Decide! For the false rings will not be able
To act the same!—Well, whom do two of ye
Love best?—Be quick, and tell me!—Ye are silent?
The rings work only on yourselves? and not
On others? Each of ye loves but himself
The dearest? Oh, ye are, all three of ye,
Deceived deceivers! all your three rings are
Not genuine. The genuine ring was doubtless
Lost anyhow. The father, to conceal,
To recompense the loss, had three rings made
For one.

Saladin.

Magnificent! Magnificent!

Nathan.

And so—the Judge continued—will ye not
Take my advice instead of my decision:
Then go!—But that is my advice: ye take
The case, just as it lies.—If each of ye
Became his ring's possessor through his father,
Each of ye may believe his ring to be
The genuine.—May-be, the father would

No more have in his family the single
Ring's tyranny !—Nay, it is certain that
He loved all three of ye, and equally ;
For he would not see two of ye oppress'd,
Only to favour one of ye.—Well, listen !
May each of ye attempt to imitate
His father's fair and most unbiass'd love !
And each of ye may strive, in emulation,
To prove the power of the stone, that's in
His ring ! and to increase the same, through meekness,
Through heartfelt, genuine cordiality,
Through kindness, and through most sincere devotion
To God ! And when the powers of the stones
Reveal themselves, once, with your great-grandchildren ;
Then, after thousand years, I summon them
Again before this seat. A wiser man
Than I, will then be sitting on this seat,
And he will speak. Now go !—In this way spoke
The modest Judge.

Saladin.

God ! God !

Nathan.

Oh, Saladin,
If thou dost feel thyself to be that wiser
That promised man...

Saladin (who rushes to him, seizing his hand, which, to the end, he does not lose hold of).

I dust ! I nothingness !
Oh God !

Nathan.

What ails thee, Sultan?

Saladin.

Nathan, my dear Nathan!—
The thousand, thousand years of thy Judge yonder
Are not elapsed as yet. His seat of Justice,
It is not mine.—Go!—Go!—But be my friend.

Nathan.

And nothing else had Saladin to tell me?

Saladin.

No, nothing.

Nathan.

Nothing?

Saladin.

Nothing else.—And why?

Nathan.

I could have wish'd for opportunity,
To lay a pray'r before thee.

Saladin.

Is there need
Of opportunity for that?—Speak out!

Nathan.

I come from a long journey, during which
I was collecting debts.—I have almost
Too much of ready money.—Time begins
Again to look most perilous;—and I
Do not know where to lodge the money safely.—
So I reflected, if not thou perhaps—
Considering that the coming war requires
Increasing funds—could'st use some treasure.

Saladin (looking steadily into his eyes).

Nathan !—
I will not ask thee, if Al-Hafi has
Already seen thee ; I will not examine,
If not some different suspicion spurs thee,
Spontaneously to offer me...

Nathan.

Suspicion ?

Saladin.

I do deserve it.—Pardon me !—What boots
It to conceal ?—In fact, I must confess,—
That I was just about—

Nathan.

Not, to demand
The same I offer'd ?

Saladin.

Certainly.

Nathan.

If so,
We both are disembarrass'd !—But that I
Cannot send all my treasure to thee, that
Arises from the youthful Templar. Surely,
Thou know'st him.—First of all I am to pay
A large amount to him.

Saladin.

A Templar ? Let
Me hope, thou dost not mean to use thy money
For the support of those my direst foes ?

Nathan.

I speak but of the one whose life was spared
By thee.

Saladin.

Ah! what art thou awak'ning in
My mind!—Indeed, entirely I forgot
This youth!—Thou know'st him?—And where is he?

Nathan.

What?
Thou didst not hear then, in what high degree
Thy clemency to him did fall on me?
He,—he, with risk of his new-spared existence,
Has saved my daughter from a death by fire.

Saladin.

He? did he so?—Ha! he did look like such!
Sooth, such had also been my brother's conduct,
Whom he so much resembles!—And is he
Still here? Go, bring him hither then! So much
I talk'd already to my sister Sittah
Of this her brother, whom she never knew,
That I must show her too his counterfeit!—
Go fetch him!—How a single virtuous deed,
Though only born by whimsical emotion,
Gives rise to many other deeds of virtue!
Go fetch him!

Nathan (dropping Saladin's hand).

Instantly! As for the rest,
I hope that's also settled? [*Goes.*

Saladin.

Ah, why did
I not let Sittah listen?—Now, to her!
To her!—Where find the words to tell her all?
[*Goes through the opposite door.*

SCENE VIII.

SCENE: *under the Palm-trees, near the Cloister, where the* TEMPLAR *is awaiting* NATHAN.

Templar (struggling with his own mind, walks up and down, till at last he gives utterance to his thoughts).

—Here does the weary victim pant for breath.—
It may! I will not, will not know more closely,
What passes in me; not anticipate,
What still there is to pass.—Enough, in vain
I fled: in vain. And truly, all I *could* do,
Was flying, and no more!—Come now what may!—
Too suddenly, to leave me time to ward
It off, the blow fell on me, which to keep
Aloof, so long and much I strove.—To see her,
Her, whom so little I desired to see,—
To see her, was to take the resolution
Ne'er to lose sight of her.—What, resolution?
Aye, resolution, that is purpose, deed;
And I but suffer'd,—suffer'd!—Seeing her,

And feeling bound to her, wove into her,
Was one.—Remains one.—Living, separated
From her, appears to me nonentity;
Is death,—and wheresoever after death
We meet, still there my death.—If that be love:
Then—truly does the Templar love,—then truly
The Christian loves the Jewish maiden!—Hem!
And what of that? I've in the holy land—
Therefore a *holy one* to me for ever!—
Already thrown off some more prejudice.—
And what claim has my Order? I as Templar,
Am dead, was dead to it from that same instant,
Which made me prisoner to Saladin.
Who says, the head, which Saladin did grant me,
Is still my old one?—'Tis a new one, which
Knows nothing, that was prated into yonder;—
One that is fitter for its native zone.
This I do feel. For 'tis with this new head,
That I begin to think, as once my father
At this place must have thought, have they not else
Imposed on me with tales.—With tales?—Indeed,
They're credible, and never seemed to me
More credible than now, where I'm but on
The verge of stumbling; where he fell.—He fell?
I'd rather fall with men, that stand with children.—
And his example is to me a pledge
For his applause. And whose applause have I
Else need of?—Nathan's?—Oh, I shall be less
E'en wanting his encouragement than his
Applause.—Oh, what a Jew!—And yet desiring,

To pass for a mere Jew. There he is coming,
Approaching swiftly, radiant with joy.
Who e'er came otherwise from Saladin?
Heigh! Nathan!

SCENE IX.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR.

Nathan.

Is it you that calls?

Templar.

You have
Been staying very long with Saladin.

Nathan.

Not just with him. In going there, I was
Delay'd too much.—Aye truly, Curd, this man
Answers his fame. His fame is but his shadow.—
But first before all other things, I hasten
To tell you...

Templar.

What?

Nathan.

That he will see you; and
That you're to come to him without delay.
Come with me to my house, where first I am
To see some other things arranged for him;
And then we'll go together.

Templar.

Nathan, never
Again I'll enter your abode, unless...

Nathan.

Then you've already been there? then you did
Already speak with her?—Well?—Tell me; how
Does Recha please you?

Templar.

Oh, beyond expression!
But, see her once again—I never will;
No, never! never more!—Unless this instant
You promise me;—that ever, evermore,
I may behold her.

Nathan.

How am I to take
Your words?

Templar (after a pause suddenly falling upon his neck).

My father!

Nathan.

My—young man!

Templar (quitting him as suddenly).

Not son?—
I do entreat you, Nathan!

Nathan.

Dear young man!

Templar.

Not son?—I do entreat you, Nathan!—I
Adjure you by the earliest ties of Nature!—
Do not prefer to them more recent bonds;

Be it enough to you, to be a man!—
Do not reject me!

Nathan.

Dear, dear friend!...

Templar.

And son?
Not son?—And even then not, then not even,
If gratitude already paved for love
The road into your daughter's heart? And then
Not e'en, if both of them were only waiting
For you to nod, to melt into one being?—
You're silent?

Nathan.

You surprise me, young Knight Templar.

Templar.

I do surprise you?—do surprise you, Nathan,
With your own thoughts? Do you not recognize them,
Because *my* mouth does give them utterance?—
I do surprise you?

Nathan.

E'en before I know
What member of the family of Stauffen
Your father was?

Templar.

What, Nathan, do you say?
In such a moment, you feel nothing but
Mere curiosity?

Nathan.

For look! Myself
Was once acquainted with a Stauffen, whose
First name was Conrad.

Templar.

Well—suppose my father
Had also borne the self-same name?

Nathan.

Indeed?

Templar.

Indeed, my name is from my father's; Curd
Means Conrad.

Nathan.

Well—if so, my Conrad still
Was not your father. For my Conrad was
What you're yourself, a Templar, never wedded.

Templar.

Oh, that's no reason!

Nathan.

What?

Templar.

Despite of that,
He may have been my father.

Nathan.

You are jesting.

Templar.

And you're indeed too nice!—For what of that?
There's something like a bastard or a bantling!
That race is by no means to be despised!—
But spare me, as regards my pedigree.

I'll spare you in my turn, regarding yours.
Not that I entertain'd the slightest doubt
As to your pedigree. No, God forbid!
You're able to attest all generations
As far up as to Abraham. From there
Upwards I know it, and I'll swear to it.

Nathan.

Your words grow bitter.—But do I deserve them?—
Did I refuse you aught?—I only did
Forbear to fix you to your word at once.—
And nothing more.

Templar.

Indeed?—And nothing more?
Oh pardon me!...

Nathan.

Well, come now, come!

Templar.

Where to?
No!—With you to your house?—Not there! not there!
'Tis burning soil!—Here I'll await you. Go!—
Am I again to see her; I shall see her
Still oft enough. If not, I have already
Beheld her far too much...

Nathan.

I'll try to speed.

SCENE X.

The TEMPLAR, *and shortly afterwards,* DAJAH.

Templar.

More than enough already!—Human brains,
So infinite of comprehension, yet
At times will be so fill'd! all suddenly
Fill'd by a trifle!—That is bad! that's bad!
Whatever may be filling it.—But patience!
The soul will soon condense the bubbling stuff;
Will soon recover room; and light and system,
They will return.—Is this then the first time
That I do love?—Or was, what by the name
Of love I knew before, not love?—Is this
Alone but love, what now I feel?...

Dajah (who had come up to him stealthily).

Knight! Knight!

Templar.

Who calls?—Ha, Dajah, is it you?

Dajah.

I have
Been managing to slip by him. But still
He could perceive us, where you stand.—Therefore
Draw nearer to me, here behind this tree.

Templar.

What is it?—Why so secretly?—What is it?

Dajah.

Indeed a secret, that is the concern,
That brings me to you; aye, a twofold secret.

The one is only known to me, the other
But known to you.—How, if we interchanged?
Entrust me yours; and I'll entrust you mine.

Templar.

With pleasure. Could I only first discover,
What you consider as my secret. But
That, certainly, will be explain'd by yours.—
Therefore commence.

Dajah.

Indeed!—No, no, Sir Knight;
You lead, and I shall follow.—For, be sure,
My secret can be of no use to you,
Unless I know yours first.—Out with it, quickly!
For if I sift it out of you by questions,
You'll not have trusted me. My secret then
Remains my secret still; and yours you lost,
And lost for nothing.—But, poor Knight!—how can
You men but venture to believe, you could
Hide from us women such a secret!

Templar.

Which
We often are unconscious of ourselves.

Dajah.

May-be. Therefore I find myself obliged
To be so friendly, to acquaint you with it.
Speak; why at once you did abscond? why thus
You gave the slip to us? and why with Nathan
You never did return? Was the impression
Which Recha made, so slight? or else, so deep?

So deep! so deep! You're not the man to teach me
To understand the fluttering of a bird,
That's pasted to a lime-twig! In a word;
Confess at once that you do love her, love her
To madness; and I'll tell you, what...

Templar.

To madness?

Oh, you're an able judge!

Dajah.

Well, grant the love,
And I will not insist upon the madness.

Templar.

Because it is a matter that's of course?—
A Templar, who does love a Jewish girl!...

Dajah.

Indeed that does not savour of much sense.—
Tho' things, at times, have more of sense in them,
Than we presume. And, surely, it were not
A thing unheard of, if the Saviour drew
Us near himself through roads which else no man
Of prudence voluntarily would take.

Templar.

So solemnly? (And if instead of Saviour,
I would say Providence; is she not right?)
You're making me more curious, than else
It is my habit.

Dajah.

Oh this is the land
Of wonders!

Templar.

(Well!—of what is wondrous. How
Can it be otherwise? when all the world
Is thronging here together.)—Take, dear Dajah,
As granted, all you did inquire of me;
That I do love her; that I really cannot
Imagine, how to live without her; that...

Dajah.

Indeed? indeed?—Then, Knight, then swear to me,
That you will call her yours, that you will save her;
Will save her present and eternal welfare.

Templar.

And how?—how can I?—Can I swear to do,
What is not in my power?

Dajah.

Yes, it is!
A single word of me will give you power
Enough.

Templar.

That e'en the father shall have nothing
To say against it?

Dajah.

Pooh! the father! father!
The father needs and must consent.

Templar.

Must, Dajah?—
As yet he is not fallen amongst robbers.—
He needs not, must not.

Dajah.

Then he must be willing.
He must, in fine, and gladly.

Templar.

Must, and gladly?
And what, if I do now inform you, Dajah,
That I myself already tried to touch
This string with him?

Dajah.

What? and he answer'd not?

Templar.

He answer'd with a dissonance which did—
Offend me.

Dajah.

What?—What do you say? You did
Exhibit but the shadow of a wish
For Recha; and he did not jump with joy?
Withdrew himself with cold reservedness?
Threw difficulties in your way perhaps?

Templar.

Almost as you describe it.

Dajah.

Well, if so,
I will not hesitate a single instant—(*pause*).

Templar.

And yet you hesitate?

Dajah.

The man is else
So kind!—I am so deeply in his debt!—
I wish he listened to advice!—God knows,
My heart is bleeding, while I thus constrain him.

Templar.

Pray, Dajah, put a brief and apt conclusion
To my uncertainty. But are you still
Yourself uncertain, whether your design
Is to be call'd a good or evil one,
If shameful, or if laudable?—speak not!
I will forget you've something to conceal.

Dajah.

That spurs, instead of checking me. Well, know then,
That Recha is no Jewess; is—a Christian.

Templar (*coldly*).

Indeed! Congratulate you! 'Twas hard labour!
Defy the pains of labouring, and do
Continue zealously to people Heaven,
If no more fit to people Earth!

Dajah.

How, Knight?
Does my intelligence deserve such scorn?
To you, a Christian and a Templar Knight,
And Recha's lover too, it does not cause
More pleasure, that she is a Christian?

Templar.

Much
More so, as she's a Christian of your making.

Dajah.

Ah! thus you understand it? That may pass!
No! him I wish to see, who could convert her!
She's happily long since, what to become
She now is spoil'd.

Templar.

Explain yourself, or—go!

Dajah.

She is a Christian child, and does descend
From Christians; is baptized...

Templar.

And Nathan?

Dajah.

Not
Her father!

Templar.

Nathan not her father?—Are
You well aware of what you say?

Dajah.

The truth,
Which oftentimes has cost me tears of blood.—
No, he is not her father...

Templar.

And he had
But nurtured her as his own daughter. Had
Brought up a Christian child to his own comfort
As Jewess?

Dajah.

Most decidedly.

Templar.

She really
Is ignorant of what she is by birth?—
She never learn'd from him the fact, that she
Was born a Christian, not a Jewess?

Dajah.

Never!

Templar.

And he not only let the child grow up
In such illusion; but in such illusion
He leaves the woman still?

Dajah.

Alas!

Templar.

What—Nathan!—
The wise, good Nathan should have had the boldness,
Thus to sophisticate the voice of Nature?—
Thus to misguide th' effusions of a heart,
Which, if abandon'd to its own impulse,
Would bend to quite a different bias?—Dajah,
Indeed, you did entrust to me a thing
That's of import,—which may have consequences,—
Which puzzles me,—regarding which, at present,
I do not know how to conduct myself.—
So, give me time—Go!—He comes by again,
He might surprise us. Go!

Dajah.

It were my death-blow!

Templar.

I'm utterly unfit to see him now.
So, if you meet him, you may give him word,
That at the Sultan's we are sure to find
Each other.

Dajah.

But, I do beseech you not
To raise in him suspicions. All I said,
Is but to give to things the final touch;
But to remove all scruples, you might have
Regarding Recha!—But if then you take her
To Europe; pray, you'll not leave me behind you?

Templar.

That will be settled, then. Now, leave me, go!

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

(SCENE: *In the Cross Walks of the Cloister.*)

The FRIAR, *and soon afterwards, the* TEMPLAR.

Friar.

Aye, aye! indeed, the Patriarch is right!
'Tis true, I gain'd indeed but small success
In all those things which he conferr'd on me,
As his commissions.—But, I ask, why does he
Confer on me just this kind of commissions?
I will not be refined; will not persuade;
Not run my nose into all things; nor have
My finger in all pies.—Did I abandon
The world for my own part, for nothing else,
But to become entangled with the world,
So much more now for other men?

Templar.

Good brother!
Aye, there you are. Long have I sought for you.

Friar.

For me, Sir?

Templar.

Do you no more remember me?

Friar.

Oh yes! I only trusted, never more
In all my life, again to have occasion
To see your Honour. So indeed I hoped
To Heaven's Goodness. Heaven's Goodness knows,
How much it grieved me, being bound to make
Your Honour that proposal. Knows, if I
Desired to find a hearing with you. Knows,
How very much I did rejoice, how much
I inly did rejoice at your refusing
So peremptorily, without much pond'ring,
To do, what never would behove a Knight.—
And yet you come? it yet work'd on you, since?

Templar.

You know already why I'm coming? Hardly
I know myself.

Friar.

You have consider'd it,
And you have found, the Patriarch is not
So much amiss as it appear'd; that glory
And gold may be acquired by his design.
That enemy is enemy, altho'
He had been seven times our guardian angel.
All this you did consider, flesh and soul,
And come and strike the bargain now.—Oh, Lord!

Templar.

Dear pious man, pray, set your heart at ease.
'Tis not for that, I come; 'tis not for that,

I want to see the Patriarch. I still
Do think about that point, the same as I
Did think before; and not for all the world,
I would consent to lose the good opinion,
Of which such upright dear and pious man
Once thought me worthy.—I am only coming,
To ask the Patriarch for his advice
In something...

Friar.

You—the Patriarch's advice?
A Knight consulting—Priestcraft?

(Looking timidly around.)

Templar.

Yes;—the matter
Is rather priest-like.

Friar.

Still no Priest did ever
Yet ask a Knight's advice, however knightly
The matter be.

Templar.

For 'tis his privilege,
To give offence; a privilege, which men
Like me do not much envy them.—Indeed,
Had I to act for self alone; indeed,
Had I to give account but to myself;
What need had I then of your Patriarch?
But certain things I'll rather do amiss
By others' guidance, than do them aright
By mine alone.—And then, I see now well,
Religion too is party; and the man,

Who thinks he's most impartial on that point,
Unwittingly only upholds the standard
Of his own party. And since that is so,
I think 'tis right.

Friar.

I'd rather not reply.
For I do not well understand your Honour.

Templar.

And yet!—(Let's think what I am wishing for!—
For sentence or for counsel?—For sincere
Or learned counsel?)—Brother, thanks to you;
Thanks for the useful hint.—Pah, Patriarch!
Be *you* my Patriarch! Besides, 'tis rather
The Christian in the Patriarch, and not
The Patr'arch in the Christian, I'm consulting.—
The fact is this...

Friar.

Not further, Sir, not further!
To what avail?—Your Honour does misjudge me.—
Much knowledge gives much care; and I devoted
Myself to one care only.—Oh, that's well!
Hark! look! There, luckily, he comes himself.
Just wait here. He already has perceived you.

SCENE II.

The PATRIARCH, *who with all clerical pomp is marching up a Cross Walk. The* TEMPLAR *and the* FRIAR.

Templar.

I'd rather shun him.—He were not my man,
Had I to choose!—A fat, red, smiling prelate!
And what a show!

Friar.

Oh, you ought first to see him,
Ascending to the Court. Now he returns
But from a visit to a patient.

Templar.

How
Must Saladin be put to shame then!

Patriarch (approaching and beckoning the Friar).

Here!—
I think that yonder is the Templar. What
Is his desire?

Friar.

I know not.

Patriarch.

Well, Sir Knight!—
Most glad to see the brave young man!—Aye, still
So very young!—Well, something may with God's
Assistance come of him.

Templar.

Aye, hardly more
Than is already, reverend Sir; and rather,
Still something less.

Patriarch.

At least I pray, that such
A pious Knight as you, still long may bloom
And flourish, to the glory and the welfare
Of all dear Christians, and the cause of God!
And surely, this will never fail, if only
Young valor yields to follow the mature
Advice of age!—With what besides can we
Oblige your Honour?

Templar.

With the self-same thing,
Which my young age is wanting; with advice.

Patriarch.

Most gladly!—But advice is to be follow'd.

Templar.

I hope, not blindly?

Patriarch.

Who did say so?—Aye,
Indeed, nobody must omit employing
The reason God bestow'd on him,—wherever
It is in place.—But is it everywhere
In proper place? Oh, no! For instance: if
God deems us worthy, to reveal to us
Through some one of his Angels—that's to say,
Through some Minister of his Word—a way,
By which the weal of the whole Christendom,
The welfare of the Church, might be promoted,
Secured, in some most special way; who dare
Then be so vent'rous, as to criticize
By way of reasoning the will of Him

Who has created reason ? Who dare measure
The everlasting laws of Heaven's Glory
By vain ambition's poor criterions ?
But let us drop this subject. Pray, what is
The case on which your Honour does demand
Our counsel now ?

Templar.

Suppose then, reverend Father,
A Jew possessed an only child,—we'll say
A girl,—whom with the utmost care he had
Brought up in love of everything that's virtuous ;
Whom he loved dearer than his soul, and who
Return'd his love with filial affection.
And now suppose, myself had been inform'd,
The girl were not the daughter of the Jew ;
That in her childhood he had pick'd her up,—
Bought, kidnapp'd,—what you please ; the girl
Were known to be a Christian child, to be
Baptized. The Jew had only brought her up
As Jewess ; leaving her in the illusion,
As if she were a Jewess, and his daughter : —
Tell, reverend Father, in such case, what must
Be done ?

Patriarch.

I'm shuddering !—But first and foremost,
Your Honour must explain, if such a case
Be fact, or only an hypothesis.
That is to say ; if such is but a fiction,
Your Honour does devise, or, if it happen'd,
And still continues happening.

Templar.

I thought,
That just to learn your Reverence's judgment,
It were all one.

Patriarch.

All one? Now see, your Honour,
How apt proud human reason is to err,
In things ecclesiastic!—In no wise!
For if the stated case is nothing but
A sport of fancy; it is not worth while
To subject it to serious reflection.
In such a case I would refer your Honour
To Theatres, which are the places, where
Such *pro et contra* may be agitated
With much applause. But if your Honour does
Not mock me with a mere dramatic farce;
If what you stated, be a fact; moreover,
Had happen'd here in our dear Diocese,
In our dear City of Jerusalem
Itself:—Aye truly, then—

Templar.

And pray, what then?

Patriarch.

Then is to be inflicted on the Jew
Most expeditiously that punishment,
Which Pontifical and Imperial law
Provide for such a crime and scandal.

Templar.

So?

Patriarch.

And the forementionʼd laws decree as follows:—
The Jew who shall seduce a Christian to
Apostacy, dies on the pyre,—ascends
The faggot.

Templar.

So?

Patriarch.

And how much more the Jew,
Who forcibly does tear a Christian child
From the community of its baptism!
For is not all that's done to children, force?
That is to say:—excepting what the Church
Will do to children.

Friar.

What then, if the child,
But for the Jew's commiserating it,
Perhaps might have expired in misery?

Patriarch.

No matter that! the Jew is to be burnt.—
For better, it died here in misery,
Than that it thus was saved, to its eternal
Perdition.—And besides, how dares the Jew
Encroach upon the rights of God? If God
Will save a person, he can save without him.

Friar.

And spite of him, I think,—redeem a soul.

Patriarch.

No matter that! the Jew is to be burnt.

Templar.

That grieves me! And much more so, as I'm told,
That he brought up the girl, not just in his
Own creed, but rather in no creed at all;
That he taught her of God not more nor less
Than reason does require.

Patriarch.

No matter that!
The Jew is to be burnt...Nay, just for that,
He is deserving to be burnt thrice over!—
What! suffering an infant to grow up
Without a creed?—What! even not acquainting
A child with the great duty of believing?
That is too bad! I'm much surprised, Sir Knight,
That you yourself...

Templar.

Most reverend Sir, the rest
In the confessional, if it please God. [*Turns to go.*

Patriarch.

What! Not e'en answer me?—Not name to me
That miscreant, that Jew?—not to arraign him
Before my tribunal?—Oh, I have means!
Immediately I'll go, and see the Sultan.
Conformably to the capitulation,
Which Saladin has sworn, he must protect us
In all the rights and doctrines whatsoever,
Which do in one way or in the other
Pertain to our most sanctified Religion!
Thank God! we're holding the Original.
We have his signature, his great seal. We!—

Besides, that easily I shall convince him,
How dangerous 'tis even for the State,
Not to believe! All ties of civic life
Are broken, solved, if people are indulged
To live without belief.—Away!—away
With such a gross offence!...

Templar.

Oh, what a pity!
That I am not at leisure for enjoying
This edifying sermon! I am call'd
To Saladin.

Patriarch.

Indeed?—If so—well—then—

Templar.

I will prepare the Sultan, if that be
Agreeable to your Right Reverence.

Patriarch.

Oh, oh!—I know, your Honour has found favour
With Saladin!—If you remember me
Before him, pr'ythee, do it with good grace.—
I'm only moved by zeal for our Lord's cause.
Whate'er I do too much, 'tis done for Him.—
Your Honour kindly may consider this!
And pray, Sir Knight, was not the thing you mention'd
About the Jew, only a Problem? that's
To say—

Templar.

A Problem! [*Goes.*

Patriarch.

(Which however I
Must try to fathom to its very bottom.
Indeed there is again a fine commission
For brother Bonafides.)—Here, my son!

[*Walks off, conversing with the Friar.*

SCENE III.

SCENE: *A Room in the Palace of the Sultan, into which Slaves are bringing a great many money-bags, which they place in rows on the ground.*

SALADIN, *and soon afterwards* SITTAH.

Saladin (finding the slaves busy with their task).

In troth! there is no end yet.—Is there much
Left of the lumber still?

A Slave.

About one half.

Saladin.

Take the remainder then to Sittah.—And
Where does Al-Hafi tarry? All that's here,
Must Hafi take at once.—Or were it better,
If I convey'd it to my father? Here
It glides by all means through my fingers.—True,
At last one does grow callous; and henceforth

It shall take skill, to squeeze out much from me.
At least, until the gold from Egypt has
Arrived here, poverty must manage and
Make shift!—Suffice it, that the distributions
Are at the Sepulchre continued! That
No Christian pilgrim must leave empty-handed!
And that—

Sittah.

What means that? Wherefore dost thou send
The gold to me?

Saladin.

Well, pay thyself; and keep
In store, what does remain.

Sittah.

Has Nathan not
Yet come and brought the Templar with him?

Saladin.

He
Is seeking for him everywhere.

Sittah.

Look here,
What, while my cast-off jewellery again
Did pass my hands, I met with.
[*Showing him a small portrait.*

Saladin.

Ha! my brother!
That is he; is he! Was he! was he! ah!
Ah, dear brave youth, whom I did lose so early!
What greater deeds would I have undertaken
With thee, and at thy side!—Oh Sittah, leave me

This portrait. And I know it too; he gave
It to his oldest sister, to his Lilla,
When she, one morning, would not be persuaded
To let him part from her embracing arms.
That morning was the last that he rode out.
Alas! I let him ride, and unattended!—
Ah! Lilla died with grief, and never pardon'd,
That I had let him ride, and so alone.—
He ne'er came back!

Sittah.

Poor brother!

Saladin.

Never heed!
For all of us once go, and ne'er come back!—
Besides,—who knows? It is not only Death,
Which may disturb a youth like him in his
Designs. Such have more foes; and oftentimes
The strongest like the weakest is subdued.—
Well, be that as it may!—I really must
Compare this portrait with the youthful Templar;
Must really see, in what degree my fancy
Deluded me.

Sittah.

Therefore I brought it. But
Return it now! I'll afterwards inform thee.
In such things woman's eyes judge best.

Saladin (to a door-keeper, who enters).

Who is there?—
The Templar?—Let him come!

Sittah.

Not to disturb you,
Nor through my curiosity to make
Him shy—

[*Throws herself on a sofa apart, and drops her veil.*

Saladin.

That's right! right!—(And his voice! I wonder,
To whose it will be like!—My Assad's voice,
Methinks, sleeps somewhere yet within my soul!)

SCENE IV.

The TEMPLAR *and* SALADIN.

Templar.

I as thy captive, Sultan...

Saladin.

As my captive?
Should I not also grant his liberty
To him *to* whom I granted life?

Templar.

Whatever
Behoves thyself to do; it does behove me,
To learn it from thee, not to presuppose it.
But, Sultan,—to protest thee special thanks,—
Thanks for my life,—does not agree with my
Profession nor my character.—However,
It is at all times at thy service.

Saladin.

Only
Forbear to use it 'gainst me!—Not that I
Begrudge my foes another pair of hands.
But not to grudge them such a heart, that falls
Too hard on me.—For I have been in nothing
Deceived in thee, my brave young man! Thou art
My Assad, both in soul and body. Look,
I now can ask thee: where thou hast been lurking
E'er since? or in what cavern thou wert sleeping?
In what a Ginnistan, through what kind Fairy,
This flower was preserved in fullest freshness
Continually? Look! I could remind thee
Of tricks, which we at one place or another
Did play together. I could quarrel with thee,
That still there was one secret thou didst keep
From me, still one adventure thou didst cheat
Me of;—yes, all this I could ask, if I
Saw only thee, and not as well myself.—
Well, be it! Of this sweet illusion is
At least this much the truth, that in my autumn
Of life another Assad blooms for me,—
I hope, Knight, thou art willing?

Templar.

All that comes
From thee to me—whate'er it is...it slumber'd
As wish within my soul.

Saladin.

Of this we'll have
Immediate proof.—Wilt thou remain with me?
Near me?—As Christian, Mussulman: no matter!

In thy White Cloak, or in a Jamerlonk;
With Turban or with thy own Felt-cap: just
As thou wilt! 'Tis all one! I ne'er expected
To see the *same* bark growing on all trees.

Templar.

Else thou would'st hardly be the man thou art;
The hero, who'd prefer to be God's gard'ner.

Saladin.

Well: if thou dost not entertain a worse
Opinion of me, we're half right.

Templar.

Entirely!

Saladin (offering his hand).

One word?

Templar (clasps the hand).

One man! And so receive then more,
Than thou couldst take from me. I'm wholly thine!

Saladin.

Too much gain for a single day! too much!
He did not come with thee?

Templar.

Who?

Saladin.

Nathan.

Templar (coolly).

No.

I came alone.

Saladin.

Ha, what a deed of thine!

And what a providential chance, that such
A deed did prove a bliss to such a man!

Templar.

Yes, yes!

Saladin.

So cold?—No, my young man! if God
Works through our means some benefit, we must
Not be so cold!—Not e'en from modesty,
Attempt to seem so cold.

Templar.

'Tis strange, that in
This world each thing displays so many sides,
Of which we often cannot comprehend,
How they can fit with one another!

Nathan.

Cling
For ever to the best side, and praise God!
For He knows how they fit each other.—But,
If thou wilt be so very nice, young man,
Indeed, then I myself must be upon
My guard with thee? For, to my sorrow, I
Am likewise such a thing of many sides,
Which often may not seem to fit each other.

Templar.

That's painful!—For at other times Suspicion
Is not my blemish.—

Saladin.

Well, speak out, who makes
Thee doubt? Indeed, I think, 'tis Nathan. What?
Suspecting Nathan? Thou? Explain! Speak out!
Come, give me thy first proof of confidence.

Templar.

I've nothing against Nathan. Only with
Myself I'm angry.

Saladin.

And for what?

Templar.

For dreaming
That possibly a Jew could e'er unlearn
To be a Jew; for dreaming so while being
Awake.

Saladin.

Out with this waking dream of thine!

Templar.

Thou know'st of Nathan's daughter, Sultan. What
I did for her, I did—because I did it.
Too proud for reaping thanks, where never I
Did sow them, I refused day after day
To see the girl again. The father then
Was far off; but he comes; he hears; he seeks me
He renders thanks; he wishes that his daughter
May please me; then he talks of expectations,
Talks of delightful prospects.—Well, I suffer
To be persuaded; go, see, find indeed
A girl...Ah, Sultan, I have cause to blush!

Saladin.

To blush? I hope, 'tis by no means, because
A Jewish girl made an impression on thee?

Templar.

Because my rash heart, trusting in the father's
Enticing prate, opposed itself so weakly

To that impression! Oh, I simpleton!
A second time I jump'd into the fire.
And now 'twas *I*, 'twas *I*, who was rejected.

Saladin.

Rejected?

Templar.

Not that the wise father does
Reject me once for all. Still the wise father
Must first make his inquiries, he must first
Consider it. Indeed! Did I not do
The same? Did I not first inquire, not first
Consider, when she shriek'd amidst the flames?—
Forsooth! by God! it is a useful thing,
To be so wise, so circumspect.

Saladin.

Well, well!
Make some allowance for a man of age.
How long, at most, can he persist in his
Refusal? Dost thou think, that he would first
Require thee to become a Jew?

Templar.

Who knows!

Saladin.

Who knows? A man, who knows this Nathan better!

Templar.

The superstition in which we grew up,
Does not cease influencing us, e'en after
We have discover'd its absurdity.
Not all are free who do bemock their fetters.

Saladin.

Most sagely said! But Nathan, surely Nathan...

Templar.

The worst of superstitions is, to think
Your own to be the most endurable...

Saladin.

May be! But Nathan...

Templar.

Yours, the only one,
To which dim-sighted mankind may be trusted,
Till they can bear the brighter light of truth;
Yours only...

Saladin.

Well! But Nathan! Such a frailty
Ne'er fell to Nathan's lot.

Templar.

I thought so too!—
But what, if still this paragon of men
Turn'd out to be such common Jew, that he
Endeavour'd to get hold of Christian children,
That he might bring them up as Jews:—what then?

Saladin.

Who says such things of him?

Templar.

The girl herself,
With whom he does decoy me, with whose hope
He willingly would seem to pay the service,
Which he'll not have me to have render'd gratis;
This very maiden, she is—not his daughter;
But is a kidnapp'd Christian child.

Saladin.

Which he,
In spite of all this, would not give to thee?

Templar (vehemently).

Would, or would not! At present he's unmask'd.
The tolerant braggadocio is unmask'd!
And I'll set on this Jewish wolf, who does
Disguise himself in philosophic sheep-skin,
Such dogs as will not fail to tear his hide!

Saladin (earnestly).

Peace, Christian!

Templar.

What? peace, Christian?—May the Jew
And Mussulman persist in being Jew
And Mussulman; and shall only the Christian
Not dare to play the Christian?

Saladin (still more earnestly).

Christian, peace

Templar (calmly).

I feel the weight of blame, which Saladin
Pens up within this word! Ah, if I knew,
How Assad, aye, how Assad had conducted
Himself on this occasion!

Saladin.

Not much better! —
Most likely just as fiery! — But who has
Already taught thee, like himself, to bribe me
Thus with a single word? Indeed, if all
Stands as thou dost describe it, I myself
Do hardly know what I'm to think of Nathan.

However he's my friend; and of my friends
One must not squabble with the other.—Be
Advised! Act cautiously! Do not expose him
To the fanatic mob of thy sectarians!
Conceal, what to revenge on him, thy Clergy
Would try to put so very near my conscience!
Be not, from spite to Jews and Mussulmen,
A Christian!

Templar.

'Twere almost too late for that!
But, thanks to that bloodthirsty Patriarch,
Whose tool I shudder'd to become!

Saladin.

What? Thou
Went'st to the Patriarch before thou went'st
To me?

Templar.

Yes, in the storm of passion, in
The eddy of irresolution!—Pardon!—
I fear that thou no more wilt recognise
In me one feature of thy Assad.

Saladin.

Were
It not this very fear! Methinks, I know
The blemishes from which our virtue springs.
This latter cultivate, and be assured,
Those shall not harm thee in my sight.—But go!
Seek Nathan in thy turn, as he has sought thee;
And bring him hither. I must bring you both
To understanding.—Should'st thou in full earnest

Desire the maiden, rest secure. She's thine!
And Nathan, he shall dearly pay for daring
To educate a Christian child without
Employing pork!—Now go!

[*The Templar goes, and Sittah rises from the sofa.*

SCENE V.

SALADIN *and* SITTAH.

Sittah.

Most singular!

Saladin.

Well, Sittah! Must my Assad not have been
A gallant beautiful young man?

Sittah.

Indeed;
If he was such, and not much more the Templar
Sat model for the painting of this portrait!
But pray, how could'st thou possibly forget
To ask him ev'rything about his parents?

Saladin.

Especially about his mother; not?
And if his mother e'er lived in this country?
Is that thy meaning?

Sittah.

Thou dost well express it!

Saladin.

Oh, nothing were more possible! For Assad
Was so much welcomed 'mongst fair Christian ladies,
Was on fair Christian ladies so intent,
That once there even was a talk—Well, well;
The topic is not liked.—Enough, I have him
Again!—and I'll have him again with all
The failings and caprices which do lie
Within his gentle heart!—Oh! Nathan must
Give him the girl. Dost thou not think so?

Sittah.

Give him?
No, leave him!

Saladin.

True! what claim has Nathan on her,
If he is not her father? He alone,
Who saved her life, as lately it was done,
Assumes the rights of him who gave her life.

Sittah.

Therefore, what, Saladin, if thou at once
Would'st take the girl to us? What, if at once
Thou would'st withdraw her from her illegal
Possessor?

Saladin.

Is there need for that?

Sittah.

There's not
Just need for that!—My curiosity

Alone is urging me, thus to advise thee;
Because regarding certain men, indeed,
It gives me special pleasure to find out
What kind of girl it is which they can love.

Saladin.

Well, thou may'st send for her.

Sittah.

Oh, may I, brother?

Saladin.

But pray, spare Nathan's feelings! Nathan must
By no means think, that he is to be sever'd
From her by force.

Sittah.

Fear not!

Saladin.

And I, indeed,
Must go myself, and try to find Al-Hafi.

SCENE VI.

SCENE: *The open hall in* NATHAN'S *house, towards the Palms, as in the first Scene of the first Act. A portion of the goods and jewels there mentioned lie unpacked.*

NATHAN *and* DAJAH.

Dajah.

Oh, everything is charming! exquisite!
Oh, everything—as only you can give it.

Where do they weave this silver-stuff with tendrils
Of gold? What is its price?—Indeed, there is
A bridal dress! No queen could wish it better.

Nathan.

A bridal dress? Why just a bridal dress?

Dajah.

Why, you did certainly not think of that,
When you did purchase it. But, truly, Nathan,
This very stuff must serve; not any other!
It seems made for a bridal dress. The white
Ground-colour emblemizes innocence:
The golden streams, perfusing it all over,
Are emblems, too, of wealth. You see? 'Tis charming!

Nathan.

What means this mock-wit? Pray, whose bridal dress
Art thou dilating on with so much learning?
Art thou betrothed?

Dajah.

I?

Nathan.

Who then?

Dajah.

I?—good God!

Nathan.

Well, who? Whose bridal dress then dost thou talk of?
For all this is for thee, and no one else.

Dajah.

For me? shall be my own?—'tis not for Recha?

Nathan.

The things I brought for Recha are pack'd up
Still in another bale. Come! clear away!
Come take away thy paltry baggage!

Dajah.

Tempter!
No, were they even the united treasures
Of all the universe! I would not touch them!
Unless you swear to me, that you'll make use
Of this express occasion, which is such,
As Heaven will not send a second time.

Nathan.

Make use? of what?—Occasion? pray, what for?

Dajah.

Oh, do not play the ignorant!—In short,
The Templar Knight loves Recha; give her to him.
For so, your sin, which now I can no longer
Keep secret, will at last come to an end.
And so the girl will come once more 'mongst Christians;
Become once more, what she was born; and be,
What she has been; and you, you have by all
Those benefits, for which we ne'er can thank you
Enough, heap'd only yet more burning coals
Upon your head.

Nathan.

Yet the old song again?—
And only harp'd on some new string, which I
Do fear, will neither sound nor hold.

Dajah.

How so?

Nathan.

Indeed, the Templar pleases me. I wish,
That rather he than any one had Recha.
But...Well, have only patience.

Dajah.

Only patience?
And pray, is patience not your own old song?

Nathan.

Have only patience for a few days more!...
But look!—Who comes there? Is it not a Friar?
Go, ask his pleasure.

Dajah.

What can be his pleasure!
[*She goes and asks.*

Nathan.

Then give!—and give before he begs.—(If I
Could only manage to come at the Templar,
Without betraying him the cause of my
Inquisitiveness! For if I betray it,
And my suspicion proves to be unfounded;
Then I've exposed the father for no purpose.)
What is it?

Dajah.

He will speak to you.

Nathan.

Well, let
Him come; and go meanwhile.

SCENE VII.

NATHAN *and the* FRIAR.

Nathan.

(Much would it please me,
Still to be Recha's father.—And why not
Remain so, even if I cease to bear
The name?—True, she will ever call me so,
If she perceives how much I love it.)—Go!—
What can I do to serve you, pious brother?

Friar.

Not much, indeed!—I'm joyful, Master Nathan,
To see you well as yet.

Nathan.

You know me then?

Friar.

Well now; who does not know you? You've imprinted
Your name upon so many people's hands.
Also in mine it stands these many years.

Nathan (stretching his hand towards his purse).

Come, brother, come, I will renew it.

Friar.

Thanks!
From poorer men I'd steal it. I take nothing—
If only you'll permit me, to renew
My own name just a little to yourself.
For also I may boast of having laid
Into your hand a something, which was not
To be despised.

Nathan.

Forgive me!—I'm ashamed!—
Tell, what it was?—and then accept for its
Atonement sevenfold its value.

Friar.

Pray,
First hear, how I myself only this day
Have been reminded of the pledge, which I
Did trust to you.

Nathan.

A pledge, to me entrusted?

Friar.

Short time ago I still dwelt as a Hermit
On Quarantana, near to Jericho.
But once Arabian marauders came,
Broke up my little chapel and my cell,
And dragg'd me with them. Fortunately I
Escaped, and to the Patriarch fled,
To beg of him some other little nook,
Where I might serve my God in solitude,
Until my life comes to a blessed end.

Nathan.

I'm sitting upon thorns, good brother. Do,
Be brief. The pledge! the pledge, you trusted me!

Friar.

Soon, Master Nathan.—Well, the Patriarch
Did promise me a hermitage on Tabor,
As soon as one were vacant; and meanwhile
He keeps me as lay-brother in the Cloister.
There, Master Nathan, I am now; and pining
A hundred times a day for Tabor. For
The Patriarch employs me in all kinds
Of things, with which I'm very much disgusted.
For instance:

Nathan.

Pray, be brief!

Friar.

Well, now it comes!—
It happens that to-day some one did whisper
Into his ear: that hereabout there lived
A Jew, who educates a Christian child
As his own daughter.

Nathan (startled).

What?

Friar.

Pray, hear me out!—
Just while he was desiring me, straightways
If possible, to find him out that Jew;
And just while he was growing mighty angry
At such misdeed, which seems to him to be
The very sin against the Holy Ghost;—

That is the sin we deem the sin of sins;
Only that, thanks to God! we do not know
Exactly what it does consist in!—then
At once my conscience is awaking; and
It does occur to me, that I myself
In former times perhaps gave an occasion
For such a great unpardonable sin.—
Speak: gave not eighteen years ago a squire
To you a female child, but few weeks old?

Nathan.

How that?—Indeed—that's true.

Friar.

Now, pray,
Look full into my face!—That squire am I.

Nathan.

Are you?

Friar.

The Lord from whom I brought it to you,
He was—methinks—one Lord of Filneck.—Wolf
Of Filneck!

Nathan.

Right!

Friar.

Because short time ago
The mother died, and he, the father, had
To make off suddenly—I think—for Gaza,
Where the poor thing could not go with him: so
He sent it you. And was it not Darun,
Where with the child I reach'd you?

Nathan.

So it was!

Friar.

No wonder, if my memory deceived me.
I had so many worthy masters; and
This one I served only so short a time.
He fell near Askalon, soon after; truly
He was a kind good Lord.

Nathan.

Oh yes! oh yes;
To whom I owe so much; so very much!
Who more than once relieved me from the sword!

Friar.

Oh brave! and so it gave you double pleasure,
To be the guardian of his little daughter.

Nathan.

You may imagine that!

Friar.

Well; pray, where is she?
I hope she had not the mischance to die?
Oh, do not say, she's dead!—If there is only
Nobody else, who has a knowledge of it,
Then all is safe yet.

Nathan.

Is it?

Friar.

Trust me, Nathan!
For look, this is my way of thinking! If
The good I mean to do, does touch too closely

On something very evil; I would rather
Not do the good; because, indeed, we know
The evil pretty well, but not by far
So well the good.—Besides it does appear
All natural, that as you did intend
To educate the Christian girl right well,
You could not fail to bring her up as your
Own daughter.—Well, such had been done by you
With utmost love and faith; and should you thus
Be recompensed? That will not do with me.
Aye truly, you had acted with more prudence,
Had you arranged, the Christian girl to be
Brought up by other hands as Christian; but
In doing so you had not shown much love
To your friend's child. And children, at that age,
Want love—e'en were it love of some wild beast—
Much more than they want Christianity.—
For Christianity there's time enough.
Provided then the maid was growing up
Before your eyes in health and godliness,—
In God's eyes she remain'd what she had been.
And is not Christianity all built
On Judaism? Oh, it vexed me often,
Did cost me tears enough, whene'er I saw,
How Christians altogether could forget,
That our own Lord himself has been a Jew.

Nathan.

You, my good brother, you must bear me witness,
If hatred and hypocrisy should rise
Against me—for a deed—ah, for a deed!—

Which you, and only you alone shall know!—
But take this knowledge with you to your grave!
As yet has vanity ne'er tempted me,
To tell it anybody else. To you
Alone I tell it. Simple piety
Alone shall know of it; for only such
Can comprehend, what deeds a man, who is
Resign'd to God, can gain from his own self.

Friar.

Well, you are touch'd? your eyes are full of tears?

Nathan.

'Twas at Darun, where with the child you reach'd me.
But probably it is not known to you,
That only few days back, in Gath, the Christians
Had murder'd all the Jews with wives and children;
You probably are not aware, that 'mongst
That number there was also found my wife,
With seven hopeful sons, who all, within
My brother's house, where they did seek protection,
Were burnt alive.

Friar.

Oh thou just God!

Nathan.

When you
Arrived, I had three days and nights in dust
And ashes lain before God's face, and wept.—
And only wept? nay, e'en arraign'd my Maker;
Raved, raged, and cursed myself and all the world.
And sworn most bitter unrelenting hatred
To every Christian.

Friar.

Ah, I do believe you!

Nathan.

But reason gradually did return.
Its gentle voice spoke: "Still there is a God!
Still even this was his decree! Take courage!
Come! exercise what thou didst know long since;
What certainly is not more difficult
To exercise, than 'tis to know;—but will it.
Arise!"—I rose, and call'd to God: I will;
If thou wilt, that I will!—Just at that moment
You did dismount, and offer'd me the child,
Wrapp'd up in your own cloak.—What then you said
To me; what I replied to you; that I've
Forgotten. This much I do know; I took
The child, I bore it to my couch, I kiss'd it,
Fell on my knees, and sobb'd; Oh God, for seven
There's one again already!

Friar.

Nathan! Nathan!
By God! you are a Christian! are a Christian!
A better Christian never was!

Nathan.

Well for us!
For what makes me appear to you a Christian,
Makes you appear to me a Jew!—But let us
Not enervate each other. Time wants action!
Tho' ever since, I have been fascinated
To this strange girl by sevenfold affection;
And although the mere thought, that I'm to lose

In her my seven sons once more, does prove
To me death-boding;—still if Providence
Reclaims her from my hands,—I will obey!

Friar.

That settles all!—For that's the very thing,
Which I so long delay'd advising you!
Now your good genius itself advised it!

Nathan.

But not the first who happens to reclaim her,
Must tear her from me.

Friar.

No, indeed not.

Nathan.

He,
Who lays to her a stronger claim than I do,
Must have at least an older.

Friar.

Certainly!

Nathan.

Conferr'd on him by blood and Nature.

Friar.

So
I meant it too.

Nathan.

Then quickly name to me
The man allied to her as brother, uncle,
As cousin, or as kinsman anyhow;
From such a man I'll not withhold her—her,
Who was created and brought up, to be

The pride of any home, of any creed.—
I hope, you know of him, who was your master,
And of his family, more than myself.

Friar.

I think I hardly do, good Nathan! For,
As you already heard, I pass'd with him
Only so very short a time.

Nathan.

And can you
Not tell at least the mother's family?
Was she not Lady Stauffen?

Friar.

Possibly!—
I think so,—yes.

Nathan.

Was not her brother call'd
Conrad of Stauffen?—was he not a Templar?

Friar.

I think he was. But hold! I recollect
That I do still possess a little book
Of my late lord. I drew it from his bosom,
When we near Askalon interr'd him.

Nathan.

Well?

Friar.

Its whole contents are prayers. We do call it
A breviary. This, I thought, might still
Be used by Christians.—True, not by myself—
I cannot read.—

Nathan.

Ne'er mind!—Come to the point!

Friar.

Into this little book are enter'd at
Both ends, and as I'm told, in my late master's
Own handwriting, both his own relations,
And likewise hers.

Nathan.

Oh, that is fortunate!
Go! run! and fetch that little book. Make haste!
I'll pay you willingly its weight in gold;
And thousand thanks besides! Hence! run!

Friar.

Most gladly!
But what the master did inscribe, that's in
Arabic. [*Goes.*

Nathan.

That is all the same! Just fetch it!—
Oh God! if still I might retain the girl,
And by her means obtain such son-in-law!—
But that is hardly possible!—Well, let
Things take what turn they may!—But who may be
The man, who did inform the Patriarch
Of such a thing? That I must surely not
Forget to ask about.—What, if moreover
It came from Dajah!

SCENE VIII.

NATHAN *and* DAJAH.

Dajah (*hastily and confusedly*).
Nathan, only think!

Nathan.
Well?

Dajah.
Ah, poor child; she was much frighten'd at it!
There sends...

Nathan.
The Patriarch?

Dajah.
The Sultan's sister,
The Princess Sittah...

Nathan.
Not the Patriarch?

Dajah.
No, Sittah!—Can't you hear? The Princess Sittah
Has sent to us, to fetch her thither.

Nathan.
Whom?
Has sent for Recha? Sittah sent for her?
Well, well: if Sittah sent for her and not
The Patriarch:...

Dajah.
What makes you think of him?

Nathan.

So thou hast lately never heard of him ?
Sure, not ? Nor whisper'd to him ?

Dajah.

I ? to him ?

Nathan.

Where are the messengers ?

Dajah.

In front.

Nathan.

Precaution
Requires that I do see them. Come ! I hope
There's nothing of the Patriarch behind it. [*Goes.*

Dajah.

And I—I stand in other fears besides.
I bet ! the only and supposed fair daughter
Of such a wealthy Jew, is no bad thing
E'en for a Mussulman.—Huzzah ! the Templar,
He will be trick'd ; aye trick'd, unless I venture
Also the second step ; unless to her
I also do discover, who she is ;—
Cheer up ! Let me employ for that, the very
First moment, which I am alone with her,
And that will be—perhaps just then, when I
Accompany her. Some first hint, at least,
While on the road, will not be all amiss.
Yes ! now or never ! Yes ! Go to ! Go to !

[*Follows him.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

SCENE: *the Room in Saladin's Palace, into which the money-bags have been brought, which are still to be seen in their places.*

SALADIN, *and shortly afterwards several* MAMELUKES.

Saladin (*as he enters*).

There lies the money still! And nobody
Knows where to find the Dervise, who most likely
Is somewhere o'er a chess-board, which indeed
Is apt to make him to forget himself,
And why not me?—Well, patience!—What's the matter!

A Mameluke.

Most welcome tidings, Sultan! Joy, O Sultan!...
The caravan from Cairo is arrived;
Is safely come, with tribute of seven years
From the rich Nile.

Saladin.

Ah, bravo, Ibrahim!
Ha; there at last! at last!—Accept my thanks
For thy most welcome news.

The Mameluke (*waiting*).

(Well, hither with them !)

Saladin.

Why wait'st thou ? Thou may'st go !

The Mameluke.

And nothing further

For my good news ?

Saladin.

What further ?

The Mameluke.

Not a fee

To the glad messenger ? Then I'm indeed
The first, whom Saladin at length has learn'd
To pay with words !—A glory too !—the first
With whom he plays the niggard.

Saladin.

Well, pick up

One of yon purses.

The Mameluke.

No, not now ! Not even

If all of them were offer'd.

Saladin.

Stubborn fellow

Come ! There are two for thee. He goes ? in earnest ?
Excelling me in generosity ?
For, surely, harder bears on him refusing,
Than giving on myself.—Here Ibrahim !—
Indeed, how could I think, so near my exit,
Of being all at once a different man ?

Will Saladin not die as Saladin?—
Then not as Saladin he ought to live!

A second Mameluke.

Well, Sultan!...

Saladin.

If thou com'st to notify...

Second Mameluke.

That now the convoy is arrived from Egypt!

Saladin.

I know already.

Second Mameluke.

I'm too late then!

Saladin.

Why
Too late?—There, for thy well intended tidings
Pick up a purse, or pick up two.

Second Mameluke.

Makes three!

Saladin.

Yes, if thou know'st to reckon!—Thou may'st take them.

Second Mameluke.

'Tis possible a third may yet arrive,
If still he can arrive.

Saladin.

How that?

Second Mameluke.

Aye, well!
May-be he broke his neck. Because no sooner
All three were certain of the convoy's coming,
Than each of us in gallop briskly started.

The foremost fell; and so I took the lead,
And did continue so into the city;
Where Ibrahim, that sneak, display'd more knowledge
Of thoroughfares.

Saladin.

Alas, the one that fell!
Friend, he that fell!—Go, mount thy horse, to meet him.

Second Mameluke.

I shall, decidedly!—And if he lives,
One half of these my purses shall be his. [*Goes.*

Saladin.

Look, what a good and noble fellow too!—
Who else can boast of Mamelukes like these?
And why should I not venture to imagine,
That my example help'd to educate them?
Away with such a thought, as to conclude
T' accustom them to different manners!...

A third Mameluke.

Sultan,...

Saladin.

'Tis thou, who fell?

Third Mameluke.

No. I'm but to announce
To thee, that Emir Mansor, who conducted
The convoy, is alighting...

Saladin.

Fetch him! Quickly!—
Ah, there he's coming!—

SCENE II.

EMIR MANSOR *and* SALADIN.

Saladin.

Welcome, Emir! Well,
How were things faring?—Mansor, Mansor, thou
Hast kept us waiting very long!

Emir Mansor.

This letter
Will state, how great a mutiny in Thebais
Thy Abulkassem first had to suppress,
Before we found it safe enough for marching.
But subsequently I did speed our progress
As much as possible.

Saladin.

I do believe thee!—
Take now, good Mansor, take without delay...
I hope, thou dost so willingly?...do take
Immediately fresh guard. Without delay
Thou must proceed; must take the bulk of treasure
To Lebanon, up to my father.

Emir Mansor.

Gladly!
Most gladly!

Saladin.

And be caution'd, do not take
Too small a guard. For things round Lebanon
Are no more all so safe as used to be.
Hast thou not heard? The Templars stir again.

Therefore be on thy guard!—Now come! where does
The convoy halt? I'll see it; and give orders
In person.—You! I then will call on Sittah.

SCENE III.

SCENE: *The Palms before Nathan's House, where the* TEMPLAR *is walking up and down.*

Templar.

Into the house I will not go.—He surely
Will show himself at last!—There was a time
When I so soon, so gladly was perceived!—
Oh, I'm to see the day, when he expresses
A wish, that I might not be found so often
Before his house.—Hem!—true, I really am
Most angry.—But why am I then so hostile
Against him?—Certes, he did say: he did
Refuse me nothing yet. And Saladin
Has taken on himself to bring him round.—
What? should, in fact, the Christian in myself
Still deeper nestle than in him the Jew?—
Who rightly knows himself? How could I else
Begrudge that little booty, which he made
With him so most particular a point,
To rescue from the Christians. True, it is
No little booty, such a creature!—Creature!

Whose creature? Surely, not that slave's, who floated
The block upon the barren strand of life,
And then ran off? Indeed, it rather is
The creature of the artist, who within
The uncut block conceived that godlike figure,
Which he did chisel!—Ah, Recha's true father
Remains, spite of the Christian who begot her,
Remains the Jew for ever.—And if I
Imagine her a simple Christian wench,—
If I imagine her without all that,
Which only such a Jew could have bestow'd;—
Speak out, my heart, what has she, that would please thee?
Oh, nothing! little! Even not her smile—
Were it but mild fair twisting of her muscles;
And were, what makes her smile, were it unworthy
Of that charm, which adorns it on her lips;—
No; even not her smile! For I have seen
Much fairer smiles spent on absurdities,
On foppery, on mockery, on flatt'rers,
And wooers!—Did they charm me also then?
Elicit also then my wish, to waste
My life in flutt'ring through their sunny beams?
Not that I know of! Still I scold the man
Who did imbue her with this higher value?
How that? why?—What, if I deserved the scorn,
With which I was dismiss'd by Saladin!
'Tis bad enough, that Saladin should think so!
How little must I have appear'd! and how

Contemptible!—And all that for a girl!
Curd! Curd! that will not do. Turn back! And what,
If Dajah had moreover tattled to me
Such things as hardly could be proved as true?—
Look there, at last he steps out of his house!—
And deeply in discourse!—Ha! and with whom?—
With him? what? with my Friar?—Ha! then surely
He knows already all! has perhaps been
Betray'd already to the Patriarch!
Ha! mad-cap that I am, what have I done?—
Alas, that thus one spark of such a passion
Can burn so vast a portion of our brains!—
Make haste, determine, what must now be done!—
Here I will step aside, and wait for them;—
Perhaps the Friar takes his leave of him.

SCENE IV.

NATHAN *and the* FRIAR.

Nathan (*coming forward*).

Once more, good brother, many thanks to you!

Friar.

The like to you!

Nathan.

To me? from you? for what?
For obstinately forcing on you, what
You have no use for?—Would, your obstinacy

Had yielded to my own! that you would not
Insist on being richer than myself.

Friar.

Besides, the book is not my own; but is
The daughter's property; is, as it were,
The daughter's only patrimonial share.—
Aye truly, she has you.—May God then grant,
That you may ne'er have reason to regret
Your having done so much for her!—

Nathan.

How can I?
That I can never. Rest secure!

Friar.

Well! well!
But certain Patriarchs and Templar Knights...

Nathan.

Have never power enough for harming me
So much, that I'd repent a deed; and least
Of all, *such* deed!—But are you then so firmly
Assured, that really it is a Templar
Who does incite your Patriarch?

Friar.

It scarcely
Can be another man. A Templar Knight
Spoke with him just before; and what I heard,
That sounded like it.

Nathan.

Still, at present, there
Is but one Templar in Jerusalem,
And this one I do know; he is my friend;
A youthful, noble, candid man!

Friar.

Right, right!
The self-same man! But what we are, and what
We ought to be here in this world, will not
Always accord.

Nathan.

Alas, no.—Well, whoever
The man is, let him do his worst or best!
With your book, brother, I defy all that;
And with it, straightways, I'll go to the Sultan.

Friar.

God speed you! And here let me take my leave.

Nathan.

And have not even seen her! Pray, come soon,
Come oft to visit us. If but to-day
The Patriarch hears nothing! But, what matter?
To-day e'en tell him what you please.

Friar.

Not I.
Farewell! [*Goes.*

Nathan.

Do not forget us, brother!—God!
Why may I not here on the spot, beneath
Thy open sky fall on my knees?—That thus
That knot, which I so often was afraid of,
Now disentangles of itself! Oh God!
How eased I feel, now that in all the world
There's nothing I've to hide! and now that I
May walk before my fellow-men as freely

As I do walk before Thyself; Thou, who
Alone need'st not to judge man by his deeds,
Which are so seldom his own deeds; Oh God!

SCENE V.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR, *who approaches him sideways.*

Templar.

Heigh! Nathan, wait! take me with you!

Nathan.

Who calls?
Is't you, Sir Knight? Where have you been, that you
Could not be met with at the Sultan's?

Templar.

We have been missing one another. Take
It not amiss!

Nathan.

Not I; but Saladin...

Templar.

You had just left...

Nathan.

Then still you spoke with him?
Well, that suffices.

Templar.

But he'll speak with both
Of us together.

Nathan.

Well, so much the better.
Then come. My step besides was thither bent.

Templar.

I hope that I may ask you, Nathan, who
Has left you there?

Nathan.

What, do you know the man?

Templar.

Pray, was it not that honest soul, that Friar,
He, whom the Patriarch so fain employs
As cat's-paw?

Nathan.

That may be. In fact
He's with the Patriarch.

Templar.

The trick's not bad;—
To make simplicity the harbinger
Of villany.

Nathan.

Aye, stupid but not pious
Simplicity.

Templar.

No Patriarch believes
Its piety.

Nathan.

For *this* man I will answer.
He'll not assist the Patriarch in acting
Vile things.

Templar.

At least he would appear so. But
He told you nothing of myself?

Nathan.

Of you?

No, not of you by name.—For I dare say,
Your name is hardly known to him.

Templar.

Aye, hardly.

Nathan.

'Tis true, that of a certain Templar Knight
He spoke to me...

Templar.

And what?

Nathan.

What once for all
Cannot be meant to bear upon yourself!

Templar.

Who knows? Pray, let me hear.

Nathan.

A Templar Knight,
He says, accused me to the Patriarch.

Templar.

Accused you?—No, that statement, with his favour—
Is fabricated.—Hear me, Nathan!—I
Am not a man who has the faculty
Of abnegating. What I did, I did!
Nor am I such a man, as would defend
All things which he has done, as rightly done.
Why should I be ashamed of failing? Is
It not my firm intention to reform?
And am I not aware in what degree
We may succeed, if willing?—Hear me, Nathan!—
The Friar's Templar Knight, who is supposed

To have accused you, that's myself, indeed!
You surely know what made me peevish! Know,
What made the blood in all my veins to seethe!
I fool! I came, with soul and body, wholly
To throw myself into your arms. But how
You did receive my suit—how cold—how luke-
warm—
For lukewarm is still worse than cold; how measured
All your exertions to elude my questions;
How far-fetched, groundless, also were the queries
With which you would appear to answer me;—
Of this e'en now I must not think, if else
I am to keep my temper.—Hear me, Nathan!—
While I was thus excited, there your Dajah
Sneak'd after me, and cried into my ear
Her secret, which appear'd to me to hold
The clue to your mysterious ways.

Nathan.

How so?

Templar.

Pray, hear me to the end!—I did imagine,
You were not satisfied to lose again
To any Christian, what from Christians you
Once rescued. So it struck me, short and good
To force you, putting to your throat the knife
Of terror.

Nathan.

Short and good? and good? Where is
The good there?

Templar.

Hear me, Nathan! Truly,
I was not right!—It seems you are not guilty.
Dajah, that fool, does not know what she says—
She hates you—and for that she only tries
To throw you into some unhappy scrape—
May-be! may-be! And I am a young fool,
Whose thoughts are always wandering in extremes;
Who's doing now too much, and now too little—
That may be too! Forgive me, Nathan.

Nathan.

Well,
If thus you speak to me.....

Templar.

In short, I went
To see the Patriarch—but did not name you.
This statement, as I said, is fabricated!
I only did relate to him the case
Abstractedly, for learning his opinion.
That too, might have remain'd undone; yes, truly!
For did I then not know the Patriarch
To be a villain? Could I not, from first
Speak to yourself? And was I then compell'd
To plunge the poor girl into jeopardy
Of losing such a father?—Well, no matter!
That villanousness of the Patriarch,
That's ever so consistent, proved the best
Expedient to restore me to myself.—
For, hear me, Nathan; hear me to the end!—
Suppose he even knew your name; what then?

I ask, what then?—He only has the power
To seize the girl, if she's no man's but yours;
'Tis only from *your* house that he can drag
Her to the Cloister.—So give her to me!
Give her to me; and let him come. Ha! surely
He shall let it alone, to tear my wife
From me.—Therefore give her to me, at once!—
She may be, or she may not be, your daughter!
Be Christian or be Jewess, or be neither!
'Tis all one! all one! I shall neither now
Nor ever in my life inquire of you
About it. Be it as it may!

Nathan.

It seems,
You think, I've much occasion for concealing
The truth.

Templar.

Be't as it may!

Nathan.

Indeed, I have
Not yet denied to you—or anybody,
Whom it behoves to know it—that she is
A Christian, and but my adopted daughter.—
Why not yet I disclosed it to herself,
For this I only to herself need make
Apologies.

Templar.

Not even to herself
You ever need to do so.—Pray, indulge
Her ne'er to see you more with other eyes!

Do spare her that discovery!—As yet
'Tis you alone who have to rule her. Give her
To me! Pray, Nathan, do; give her to me!
To save her once again to you, that's what
But *I* can do—and will do.

Nathan.

Aye—could! could do!
But now, no more. It is too late for that.

Templar.

How so? too late?

Nathan.

Thanks to the Patriarch...

Templar.

The Patriarch? thanks? thanks to him? for what?
Is *he* pretending to deserve our thanks?
For what? for what?

Nathan.

That now we know, to whom
She is related; aye, that now we know
To whose hands she may safely be deliver'd.

Templar.

For this may thank him—who for more will thank him!

Nathan.

'Tis from those hands that now you must receive her;
And not from mine.

Templar.

Poor Recha! what things must
Befall thee, oh poor Recha! what to other
Poor orphans were a blessing, proves to thee

Misfortune!—Nathan!—And where are they, those
Relations?

Nathan.

Where they are?

Templar.

And who they are.

Nathan.

Especially a brother is found out,
Of whom you must demand her hand.

Templar.

A brother?
What is this brother then? Is he a soldier?
Or an ecclesiastic? Pray, let's hear
What hopes I have.

Nathan.

I do believe, that he
Is neither of the two—or both. I do
Not know him yet exactly.

Templar.

And besides?

Nathan.

A brave man, with whom she will not be placed
Amiss.

Templar.

Still he's a Christian!—Surely sometimes
I'm at a loss what I'm to make of you;—
Pray, do not take it unkind, Nathan!—Will she
Not have to play the Christian amongst Christians?
And will she not at last become in fact
What long enough she play'd? And will the tares

At last not stifle the pure wheat, which you
Did sow?—And this so little does affect you?
In spite of this you can declare—you can?—
That with her brother she will not be placed
Amiss?

Nathan.

I think so! hope so!—If, however,
There should be anything that she were lacking,
Has she not you and me at any time?

Templar.

Oh, what could she be lacking, while with him!
Will that dear brother not for his dear sister
Provide most amply every kind of robes,
Of sweetmeats, and of finery? And pray,
What needs a sister more?—Indeed; she needs
A husband too!—Well, well, e'en such,—e'en such
Will her dear brother find for her in time,
As best he can! and the most Christianly
Will be the best and fittest!—Nathan, Nathan!
Oh, what an angel have you educated,
Whom other people now will spoil for ever!

Nathan.

Fear not! that angel still will always render
Herself well worthy of our love.

Templar.

You can
Not say so! cannot say so of *my* love!
My love allows no deprivation; none,
However trifling! Even not a name!—

But hold !—Does she suspect already, what
Has come to her ?

Nathan.

May be ; though I do not
Know whence.

Templar.

No matter that. She shall—she must
In either case first learn it from myself,
What fate is threat'ning her. My purpose, not
To see her, nor to speak to her again,
Until I dared to call her mine,—that purpose
Is dropp'd. I hasten...

Nathan.

Stay ! where to ?

Templar.

To her !
To learn if this girl's soul is masculine
Enough, to take the only resolution
That would be worthy of herself.

Nathan.

Which ?

Templar.

This :
To care no more for you, nor for her brother—

Nathan.

And ?

Templar.

And to follow me ;—e'en if she should
In doing so be driven to become
A Moslem's wife.

Nathan.

Stay! for you will not find her.
She is with Sittah, with the Sultan's sister.

Templar.

Since when? and why?

Nathan.

And if there you will find
The brother with them; come with me.

Templar.

The brother?
Of whom? of Sittah, or of Recha?

Nathan.

Both,
It well may happen. Come with me! Pray, come!
[*Leads him off.*

SCENE VI.

SCENE: *in Sittah's Harem.*

SITTAH *and* RECHA *engaged in conversation.*

Sittah.

How pleased I am with thee, sweet girl!—But pray,
Be not so anxious! so alarm'd! so timid!
Be cheerful! let me hear thee talk! be more
Familiar!

Recha.

Princess,...

Sittah.

No! not princess! Thou
May'st call me Sittah,—thy dear friend—thy sister.
Call me thy little mother!—Which almost
I might be too.—So young! so wise! so pious!
How vast thy knowledge is of everything!
How much thou must have read!

Recha.

I read?—Oh Sittah,
Thou mock'st thy silly little sister. I
Can scarcely read.

Sittah.

Not read? thou hypocrite!

Recha.

A little, and my father's hand!—I thought,
That thou didst speak of books.

Sittah.

Indeed, of books.

Recha.

Sure, as to books, it puzzles me to read them.

Sittah.

In earnest?

Recha.

In full earnest. For my father
Esteems too little that cold book-learning,
Which only does impress our brains with its
Dead letters.

Sittah.

Aye, what say'st thou? After all
He's not all wrong!—So then the many things
Thou know'st...

Recha.

I only know from his own mouth;
And as to most of them, I e'en could tell thee
How—where—and why—he taught it me.

Sittah.

True, thus
Instruction works the stronger. Our whole soul
Does so at once imbibe instruction.

Recha.

Surely,
E'en Sittah reads not much, or not at all!

Sittah.

Why so? I'm not vain of the contrary.—
But why? Thy reason! Boldly speak. Thy reason!

Recha.

She's so straightforward; she's so unaffected;
She's all her own original...

Sittah.

Well? Well?

Recha.

The books but seldom leave us so; so does
My father say.

Sittah.

Oh, what a man is he,
Thy father!

Recha.

Is he not?

Sittah.

And how he always

Does hit the mark!

Recha.

Does he not?—And this father—

Sittah.

What ails thee, my dear love?

Recha.

This father—

Sittah.

God!—

Thou'rt weeping?

Recha.

And this father—Ah! it must

Have vent! My heart wants room, wants room...

[*Overcome by her tears, she throws herself at Sittah's feet.*

Sittah.

Child, what

Befalls thee? Recha?

Recha.

And this father am—

Am I to lose!

Sittah.

Thou? art to lose? lose him?

How that?—Be calm!—Thou never shalt!—Arise!

Recha.

Not purposeless shalt thou have made the offer,
To be a friend to me, to be my sister!

Sittah.

I am so! am so!—But arise! or I
Must call for help.

Recha (regaining her strength and rising).

Ah! pardon! pardon me!—
My agony made me forgetful, who
Thou art. Lamenting is of no avail
With Sittah. It is cool reflecting reason
Alone, which is with her omnipotent.
Whose cause *that* pleads before her, he does conquer.

Sittah.

Well? well?

Recha.

No; never will my friend, my sister,
Allow such thing; she never will allow
Another father to be forced on me!

Sittah.

Another father? forced? on thee? Who has
The might? or e'en the will, to do so, love?

Recha.

Who? who else, but my good—my wicked Dajah,
Might have the will,—will have the might.—But surely,
Thou dost not know this good—this wicked Dajah?
Well, God forgive her!—nay, reward her! She
Conferr'd on me so much of good,—so much
Of evil!

Sittah.

Evil, and on thee?—Then, truly,
There's not much good in her.

Recha.

Still—very much,
Aye, very much!

Sittah.

Who is she?

Recha.

She's a Christian,
Who nursed me in my childhood; who did nurse me
So well!—Thou wilt not credit it!—Who made,
That I so little miss'd a mother!—God
Reward her!—But who teased and tortured me
So very much.

Sittah.

About what object? why?

Recha.

Alas, poor woman!—as I told thee—she's
A Christian, and must tease from love;—She's one
Of those enthusiasts, who think they know
The universal, only truthful path,
That leads to God.

Sittah.

Oh, now I comprehend!

Recha.

And who feel bound in duty to point out
This road to every one who misses it—
And hardly they can help it; for suppose
'Tis true, that only this road is the right one;

How could they with tranquillity look on,
When friends of theirs walk in a different way,—
Which leads to ruin, to eternal ruin?
Or else it would be possible to love
A man, and at the same time still to hate him.—
Nor is it that which forces me at last
To loud complaints against her. Willingly,
I would continue to endure her groans,
Her warnings, prayers, and threats; aye willingly!
They always did awaken thoughts, both good
And useful. And, in truth, must we not feel
Much flatter'd, that some one, no matter who,
So dearly does esteem and love us, that
He cannot bear the thought, that at some time
To come, he is to part from us for ever!

Sittah.

Most true!

Recha.

But—but—that goes too far at last!
To this I've nothing to oppose; not patience,
Nor meditation; nothing!

Sittah.

Well? to what?

Recha.

To what just now she would disclose to me.

Sittah.

Disclose to thee? just now?

Recha.

Only just now!
In coming hitherward, we closely pass'd

A fallen Christian Temple. Suddenly
She stopp'd; appear'd to struggle with herself;
Turn'd her moist eyes now up to Heaven, now
Upon myself. Come, said she finally,
Let's take the shortest way across this Temple!
She goes; I follow her; my shudd'ring looks
All wand'ring over loose and rocky ruins.
Again she stopp'd. And now I found myself
With her hard by the sinking steps of some
Decaying altar. Fancy, how I felt,
When there, with streaming tears and wringing hands,
She threw herself down at my feet!...

Sittah.

Poor child!

Recha.

When by the Holy Virgin, who might there
At other times have granted many prayers,
Wrought many wonders, she adjured me;—when
With looks of true compassion she adjured me;
To have compassion on myself, at length—
At least to pardon her, if now she must
Disclose to me, what claims her church had on me.

Sittah.

(Unhappy girl!—All this I guess'd!)

Recha.

That I
Did spring from Christian blood; that I'm baptized;
Not Nathan's daughter; and he not my father!—

God! God! He not my father!—Sittah! Sittah!
Once more behold me at thy feet...

Sittah.

Oh Recha
Not this! arise!—My brother comes! arise!

SCENE VII.

SALADIN, SITTAH, *and* RECHA.

Saladin.

What is it, Sittah?

Sittah.

God! she's in a swoon!

Saladin.

Who is it?

Sittah.

Well, thou know'st...

Saladin.

Our Nathan's daughter
What ails her?

Sittah.

Child, compose thyself!—The Sultan...

Recha (creeping to Saladin's feet, with her head drooping).

I will not rise! not rise before!—will not
Behold the Sultan's countenance before!—

Will not admire the image of eternal
Justice and goodness, beaming in his eyes,
Upon his brow, before he...

Saladin.

Rise...arise!

Recha.

Does promise me...

Saladin.

Come! I do promise it,...
Whatever 'tis!

Recha.

Not more, nor less, but thou
Wilt leave my father to myself; and me
To him!—I do not know yet, who besides
Demands to be my father;—can demand it.
Nor will I know it. But makes blood alone
The father? blood alone?

Saladin.

Now I perceive!
Who was so cruel, e'en to thee, to thee;
To ring such things into thy ears? Is it
Without a doubt already? is it proved?

Recha.

It must be! Dajah says she learn'd it from
My nurse.

Saladin.

Thy nurse!

Recha.

Who from a sense of duty,
Entrusted it to her, when dying.

Saladin.

Dying,
Indeed?—And wand'ring too, perhaps?—And what,
If it be true!—Forsooth: the blood, the blood
Alone, is far from making one a father!
It scarcely makes the father of a brute.
At most, it does entitle to aspire
To such a name.—Pray set thy mind at ease!—
And wilt thou take advice? Are there two fathers
Contending for thee;—leave them both, and take
The third!—Take me, and let me be thy father!

Sittah.

Oh do it! do it!

Saladin.

I'll be a good father;
A loving father I will be!—But hold!
Something much better still occurs to me.—
What need hast thou of fathers altogether?
Suppose they die? Therefore look out in time
For one who will keep pace with thee in living!
Know'st thou not one yet...

Sittah.

Do not make her blush!

Saladin.

That's just what I intended. Blushing makes
So beautiful the ugly; should it not
Still much more beautify the beautiful?
Thy father Nathan I have order'd hither;
And some one else besides—aye, some one else.

Dost guess him?—Hither!—Sittah, may I hope,
Thou wilt permit it?

Sittah.

Brother!

Saladin.

And take care,
To blush before him very much, dear girl!

Recha.

Before whom? blushing?...

Saladin.

Little hypocrite!
Thou may'st as well turn pale!—Just as thou wilt,
And canst!—

(*A female slave enters and approaches Sittah.*)

Are they indeed already there?

Sittah (*to the slave*).

Well! let them enter.—Brother, they are there!

LAST SCENE.

NATHAN *and the* TEMPLAR *joining* SALADIN, SITTAH, *and* RECHA.

Saladin.

Ah, welcome, dear good friends!—And, Nathan, as
To thee, first of all things I must inform thee,
That thou may'st send and fetch thy money now,
At any time convenient to thee.

Nathan.

Sultan!...

Saladin.

I'm now, in my turn, at thy service...

Nathan.

Sultan!...

Saladin.

The caravan is there. I'm richer now,
Than ever I have been all this long while.—
Come, tell me what thou want'st, to undertake
Some speculation on the grandest scale!
For even you, e'en you, commercial men,
Can never have too much of ready cash!

Nathan.

Why first about this trifle?—There I see
An eye in tears, which first to dry, I deem
Far more important. (*Approaching Recha.*)
Thou hast wept? What is it
That troubles thee?—speak, art thou still my daughter?

Recha.

My father!...

Nathan.

Hush! We understand each other!—
Be cheerful! Be composed! If else thy heart
Is still thy own! If else thy heart has not
To fear some threatening loss besides!—Thy father
Is never lost to thee!

Recha.

None, none besides!

Templar.

None, none besides? —Well; then I am deluded.
For what we never fear'd to lose, we never
Imagin'd or desired ourselves to be
Possess'd of.—Right! right well!—That changes all
Between us, Nathan!—Saladin, we came
At thy command. But I misguided thee;
Pray, do not put thyself to further trouble!

Saladin.

Again so rash, young man! Must everybody
Advance to meet thy wishes? everybody
Divine them?

Templar.

Well, thou hear'st! thou see'st, oh Sultan!

Saladin.

Indeed I do! 'Tis bad enough, thou wert
Not surer of thy point!

Templar.

Well, now I am.

Saladin.

A man who thus is boasting of a service,
Revokes its benefit. What thou didst save,
Is not thy own for that. Or else the robber,
Whom covetousness drives into the fire,
Were, like thyself, a hero!

(*Approaching Recha, in order to lead her up to the Templar.*)

Come, dear girl,
Come! Be not so punctilious with him.
For were he different, were he less warm

And proud, he had neglected saving thee.
Well, balance one against the other. Come!
Put him to shame! and do what *he* should do!
Confess thy love to him! make *thou* the offer!
And if he does refuse thee, or if ever
He does forget, how much more by this step
Thou did'st for him, than he for thee;—and pray,
What has he done for thee? He made himself
A little smoky! mighty much!—then he
Has nothing of my brother, of my Assad;
Bears only Assad's mask, but not his heart.
Come, dear one...

Sittah.

Go! go, darling, go! This is
Still little for thy gratitude; indeed
'Tis nothing yet.

Nathan.

Hold Saladin! hold, Sittah!

Saladin.

Thou too?

Nathan.

Here has another still to speak...

Saladin.

Who does deny that? There's no question, Nathan,
To such a foster-father there belongs
A vote! the first, if thou requir'st. Thou see'st
I know how all the matter lies.

Nathan.

Not all!
Not of myself I speak. There's some one else;

A very, very different one, whom first
To hear, I do request thee, Sultan...

Saladin.

Who?

Nathan.

Her brother!

Saladin.

Recha's brother?

Nathan.

Yes!

Recha.

My brother?

So I've a brother?

Templar (*starting from his silent and sullen inattention*).

Where? where is he then,
This brother? Is he not yet here? I was
To find him here.

Nathan.

Have patience!

Templar (*very bitterly*).

Oh, he has
Imposed on her a father:—will he not
Find out a brother for her too?

Saladin.

That was
Still wanting! Christian! such a mean suspicion
Had never been allow'd to pass the lips
Of Assad.—Well! go on this way!

Nathan.

Forgive him!—
I willingly forgive.—Who knows, what we
In his place, and at his age, might have thought!
(*Approaching the Templar in a friendly manner.*)
Of course, Sir Knight! — Distrust comes from
Suspicion!
If, from the first, you had vouchsafed to tell me
Your *real* name...

Templar.

What?

Nathan.

You are not a Stauffen.

Templar.

Who am I then?

Nathan.

Your name's not Curd of Stauffen.

Templar.

What is my name then?

Nathan.

Leu of Filneck.

Templar.

What?

Nathan.

You startle?

Templar.

And with reason! Who does say so?

Nathan.

I; who can tell you more. But bear in mind,
I do not tax you with a falsehood.

Templar.

Not?

Nathan.

It well may be, yon name becomes you likewise.

Templar.

I think it does! (God bade him speak this word!)

Nathan.

Because your mother was a Stauffen. But
Her brother's name, I mean your uncle's, who
Did bring you up; with whom your parents left you
In Germany, when chased by that rough climate,
They sought these regions once again; *his* name
Was Curd of Stauffen; and perhaps he has
Adopted you as his own son. Pray, tell me,
Is it already long since you came over
With him? And is he still alive?

Templar.

What shall
I say?—oh, Nathan!—Certainly! It is so!
He lives no more. And I came only with
Our Order's latest reinforcement. But,—
But what has Recha's brother with all this
To do?

Nathan.

Your father...

Templar.

What? e'en him you knew?
E'en him?

Nathan.

He was my friend.

Templar.

He was your friend?

Oh, Nathan, is it possible!

Nathan.

Though passing

As Wolf of Filneck, still he was no German...

Templar.

E'en that you know?

Nathan.

Had only wed a German;

Follow'd your mother only for a time

To Germany...

Templar.

No more! I do beseech you!—

But what of Recha's brother? Recha's brother...

Nathan.

Are you!

Templar.

I? I her brother?

Recha.

He my brother?

Sittah.

They're brother and sister!

Saladin.

What? they?

Recha (offers to embrace him).

Ah, my brother!

Templar (steps back).

Her brother!

Recha.

'T cannot be! no, no! his heart
Knows nothing of it!—God! we are deceivers!

Saladin (to the Templar).

Deceivers? what? thou think'st so? thou can'st think so?
Deceiver thou thyself! for all things are
Deceit with thee; face, voice, walk! nothing thine!
What, not acknowledge such a sister! Go!

Templar (humbly approaching the Sultan).

Do not thou, too, mistake my wond'ring, Sultan!
And in a moment, such in which thou never
Saw'st Assad nor myself; do not misjudge
Myself and him! (*Hastening to Nathan*).
Nathan, you take and give,
Both with full hands!—But no! you give me more
Than you are taking! infinitely more!
(*Embracing Recha.*)
Ah, my dear sister! my dear sister!

Nathan.

Blanda
Of Filneck!

Templar.

Blanda? Blanda?—And not Recha?
No more your Recha?—God! you do disown her?
You call her by her Christian name again?
Disown her, and for my sake?—Nathan! Nathan!
Why do you make her suffer for it? her!

Nathan.

What shall I do?—My children! oh, my children!
For is my daughter's brother not my son
As well;—if he consents?

(While Nathan gives himself up to their embraces, Saladin in anxious amazement draws near Sittah.)

Saladin.

What say'st thou, sister?

Sittah.

I'm moved...

Saladin.

And I—I'm almost shrinking back
From some emotion, more subduing still!
Prepare for it, as best thou canst.

Sittah.

How that?

Saladin.

Nathan! a word with thee apart! one word!

(While Nathan is drawing near to him, Sittah walks up to the Templar and to Recha, to express her sympathy. Nathan and Saladin speak in an under voice.)

Pray! Nathan! listen! Did'st thou not relate
Before?—

Nathan.

What?

Saladin.

That her father did not come
From Germany, and was not born a German?
What was he then? which was his native land?

Nathan.

That, he himself would ne'er confide to me.
From his own mouth I had learn'd nought about it.

Saladin.

He was no Frank at all? no Western man?

Nathan.

Oh, that he were none such, he did confess.—
His fav'rite talk was Persian...

Saladin.

Persian? Persian?
What need I more?—'Tis he! It was he!

Nathan.

Who?

Saladin.

My brother! most decidedly! Most surely,
My Assad!

Nathan.

As thou hit'st on it thyself,—
Take then this book, which holds the confirmation!

[*Presents to him the Breviary.*

Saladin (*eagerly opening it*).

Ah! his own hand! E'en that I recognise!

Nathan.

They know of nothing yet. It still does rest
With thee alone, what they shall learn of it!

Saladin (turning over the pages of the Breviary).

And should I not my brother's children own?
Not own my niece and nephew—my dear children?
Not own them? I? leave them perhaps to thee?

(*Again aloud*)

'Tis they! 'tis they! oh Sittah! 'tis! 'tis they!
No doubt they are my—thy own brother's children!
[*Rushes to embrace them.*

Sittah.

What do I hear? Could it be otherwise!—

Saladin (*to the Templar*).

Now, headstrong lad, now thou must love me still!
(*to Recha*)
Now still I am what I would be; am so
With or without thy leave!

Sittah.

I too! I too!

Saladin.

My son! my Assad! my dear Assad's son!

Templar.

I of thy blood! So all those dreams, with which
They once did lull my infancy, they were
Still more than dreams!
[*Falls at Saladin's feet.*

Saladin.

Behold that roguish lad!
He knew something about it; yet he would
Allow me to become his murderer!—wait!
[*During the silent repetition of reciprocal embraces, the curtain drops.*

Finis.

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